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[LOST AND FOUND.]

THE FLAW IN THE DIAMOND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlington's Will," "Leaves of Fate," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MABEL, recovering consciousness, found herself in the little parlour near the reception-room, lying on the couch, the velvet pillows piled about her head. Lady Constance kneeling before her, with her gold vinaigrette eagerly presented, someone chafing vigorously at her hands, and someone else pressing warm and tender kisses upon her forehead.

Her wide, dark eyes took in the scene, a little bewilderedly, but yet quickly, she raised herself, and exclaimed, brokenly:

"I am safe, oh, I am safe."

"Safe for ever, my darling, my treasure, while there is life and strength left with me," murmured a low voice in her ear.

The swift glow that these words in Morley Ashton's voice could not fail to bring, still farther assisted her returning strength. She turned her eyes to Lady Constance, expecting to see displeasure and astonishment in that lady's looks, but she had turned around to whisper to someone at the head of the couch.

"Not quite yet, Grace, give her time to be thoroughly restored. It would be cruel indeed to find it a mistake."

"There is no mistake. My heart tells me that its own is near," returned an agitated voice.

She was able to assist herself now, and Mabel turned round quickly, and saw the pale-faced woman in the heavy black dress, standing there looking down upon her with eager, glowing, triumphant joy.

"The Countess Woxley!" murmured Mabel, turning to Morley, timidly, for the explanation.

"No, no—no countess, give a dearer name," exclaimed her ladyship, with a wild sob, "your mother, your mother, my precious child."

"My mother," repeated Mabel, in utter astonishment. "I have been taught to believe her dead. It is little I have known about her."

"She is not dead, she is here. My darling, my darling! The world is not all a dreary blank. I have found my child!" exclaimed Lady Grace, in a voice of extreme agitation, and catching the girl in her embrace, she kissed her with passionate joy, and tender love.

Mabel, deeply moved, and completely surprised, submitted passively, and then asked in a faint, tremulous voice:

"Can you give me proof that all this is not a delusion, which will vanish when I seek to substantiate its truth. I dare not trust myself to believe it."

"My dear countess, will you take a seat, as close as you please, but let us remember that our patient is still weak, and has evidently been through some very exhausting and trying scene, and let us all try to be calm and composed," said Morley Ashton, gently seating the agitated countess, and bringing an easy-chair for his mother also, while he took his station behind it, where he could watch every shade that crossed Mabel's beautiful face.

"In the first place, let me tell her of the consternation and alarm with which my mother discovered her absence from the house. You had confided to her your history, dear Mabel, and she knew therefore about the danger, which is still a mystery to me. She filled me with her own alarm, and when we had exhausted all the places likely to contain you, we began searching the grounds. Do you remember how you came flying to me, with that pistol in your hand, and how you dropped fainting at my feet?" asked Mr. Ashton, gently.

Mabel shuddered, and after drinking the wine which Lady Constance presented, she told them of the escape she had made.

The two women wept and shuddered. Morley's eyes flashed fire, but he took her hand and stroked it softly.

"A brave, brave soul! Have I not had proof of that to-day, and before to-day? But that cowardly fellow shall be watched and tracked, this thing shall not occur again."

"Oh, my darling, my daughter!" sobbed the Countess Woxley. "Heaven watched over you, and I

cannot regret that it has happened, since it has given you to my knowledge!"

"How has it given me to your knowledge?" asked Mabel.

Her ladyship raised the hand which had dropped from Morley's clasp, thrilled with a tender glow. She pushed back the velvet and pointed to the mark.

"See! In the midst of untold anguish of mind, grief, rage, mortification, and outraged love, with my physical strength also slipping away from me, just on the verge of a long and dangerous illness, I had strength and will enough to do something to secure to myself the one hope left me. One horrible fear had always haunted me in anticipation of your birth, and that was that the child of Euphemia would be palmed upon me, and brought up as the true heir. I had one trusted confidant always near me. I commanded, I conjured, I entreated her not to leave me one moment during the hour of my trial, nor to lose sight of the babe. I procured the marking apparatus, and I gave her the design she was to imprint upon my darling's arm. It is here, and without it I should be sure. My heart has spoken!"

"The mark," exclaimed Mabel, in dismay; "oh, is that all? There is just such another, precisely the same, on Mark's arm."

"Mark Daly's?" ejaculated Morley; "this is inexplicable. My dear countess, did you never see your child?"

"I never looked upon its baby face. It was taken from me at once, for I went into convulsions. I lay five weeks vibrating between life and death, unconscious of all my misery. When I recovered, and my reason returned, and asked for it, my faithful attendant, who was my foster-mother, and loved me better than her own life, told me that she herself had put it out to nurse, and that the feeble little thing, born of a mother's agony of mind as well as body, had died. She did not question it, and since no other was offered, which had been my morbid terror, I believed it also. Are you sure that Mark has the same design on his arm? It seems impossible!"

"It is the same, the very same. I know it is. Don't you remember, Lady Ashton, that day in your

boudoir, when we discovered that we were old friends, Mark and I?" returned Mabel, sorrowfully.

"But, Grace, you surely know if your child were son or daughter," said Lady Constance.

The countess had both hands clasped over her forehead.

"I am trying to think, oh, I am trying to think. I was so weak and miserable, so full of horrible memories, so crushed with my woful experience, that Elsie avoided all allusions that would draw my thoughts backward. The faithful creature's devotion surely saved me from madness. We used to talk about the child—but we always called it the 'baby.' But there must have been something, oh, if I could only think, there must have been something said, for I have never thought of it, except as a lovely girl, never once had a single thought but of a daughter. And now Elsie is dead."

"The records must tell," said Morley. "I will search for them at the earliest possible moment. I must go, of course, to the chapel at Woxley."

"Is this Mark of your age—what is your age, my child?"

She gave the date and the years.

The countess sighed drearily.

"The years are right, but not the date. But what of that," she added, eagerly; "whoever concealed you from me, or palmed off a story of your death, would have an object in teaching you differently. The mark is a sure proof—and yet, for the other to have it, too! You know him—what is his history?"

"He was there where I was brought up, in a retired, lovely spot, not a house except this farmhouse within half-a-mile. We were much alike. I remember that we were all in all to each other, and made up by our affection for the harshness and unkindness of those people who had us in charge. They made no disguise of our being friendless waifs, without father or mother. We had that fact stamped forcibly enough into our tender minds. There was a man and a woman who had the charge of us. I have tried since to puzzle out whether they were married people, but it is my impression that they were brother and sister. They were both cold, frigid, and unfeeling in their nature, or they could not have been so indifferent to two forlorn little creatures like Mark and myself. But yet I remember I thought Mark very rich and fortunate, because every now and then a woman came to see him, and brought him little presents, and took him up in her lap, and kissed him, and once I saw her crying over him. Oh, I cannot recall now without a pitying tear, my terrible grief when that woman came and took 'Arkie,' as I always called him, away to live with her, and go to school. It seemed to me that all the joy of my life had gone out for ever, and it was indeed a dreary, woful year which followed, almost every night of which saw me weep myself to sleep, crying for Arkie. Then came my own summons. One day I was called from my haunt by the brookside, to the sitting-room, as they called it at the farmhouse. A man was there, dressed like a gentleman; but, child as I was, my heart shrank away from him with an instinctive aversion, though he held out his hand, and tried to appear pleasantly.

"He looked at me attentively, said something about my growing up to be of use, and told me he was my father, and had come to take me away, and put me to a school. I was delighted, because I thought I should find Arkie, and it was pleasant to think of any change from my lonely, dismal life. I was taken to a respectable boarding-school, and remained there ten years, never leaving the place except now and then, when I went home with some schoolgirl during the vacation. I was fond of books, and I was happy in my quiet way. I think my singular experience developed a dreamy nature, for I made an inner life of my own."

"And no one came to see you who seemed to belong to you?" asked the countess, breathlessly.

"None but this man, who came once a year."

"And there was no woman—no woman with large, black eyes, red cheeks, and glittering ornaments?" cried the countess, her voice vibrating with its agony of suspense.

"Never, with him; but, ah, yes, I do remember such a woman. It is strange how your description brings it back. She came there one day, and she asked for me; and when she came and stood by me, she looked at me from head to foot, and her eyes seemed to flame, and burn upon me. The girls all said she was grand and handsome enough for a queen; and I remember she wore long, shining earrings, and her hands were covered with rings."

"That is the one, that is she," gasped the countess, "tell me what she said."

"She kept looking at me, and then she burst into a long, loud, disagreeable laugh, although her voice was rich and musical, turned around, and said, contemptuously:

"You will make a charming assistant for the Rev.

Mr. Whitehead. It would please somebody to see you, how it would please her!"

"And then she went away, and I have never seen her since."

The Countess Grace had started up, her pale, proud face almost furious beneath a fierce tempest of anger.

"It was she," she gasped, her delicate hands clenched, the veins standing out on her forehead like knotted cords; "it was that serpent, that vile syren. Oh! that heaven suffers her to live and mock me!"

Lady Constance drew her gently back to her seat.

"Go on, Mabel," whispered Morley.

"My worst trials began when I left the school, when this man, who called himself my father, took me into his care. Oh! then all too soon, I learned for what a terrible life he had educated me! The man was a professional thief, a daring burglar, a monstrous swindler, and I was one of the wretched instruments to gather and conceal his plunder. I rebelled fiercely at first; but I dare not act upon your already bleeding sympathies, by telling you what cruel means he used to break my spirit, and cow me down. He worked upon my fears too, was always threatening to expose me as the author of the thefts, showed such strong power that I trembled before him, and, like one dumb and blind, yielded to his wishes. I made many frantic attempts to escape, especially after Sidney joined him, and persecuted me with his odious pretensions of attachment; but it was only when Abiatha Broad—blessed, blessed benefactor that he was!—assisted me, that I succeeded. The rest you know."

"You are my child!" cried the countess, flinging her arms around her, as if to hold her from every attack. "It is enough for me to know it, by knowing what that woman said to you. She said, thinking you would be led into sin and vice. Heaven be praised that you are safe. We will reward this Abiatha Broad. He shall bless the day he befriended you."

"You forget my dear countess," said Morley Ashton, gently, "as I myself have forgotten that you have your own trial to look after. If, as your story suggests to me, there is some deep and iniquitous plot on foot, it behoves you to move cautiously and wisely. The first important thing seems to be to find this man who claims to be Mabel's father, the man who, as she acknowledged, put her to school, and took her away from him. Can you identify him, anywhere, dear Mabel?"

"Anywhere—everywhere, through all life's misadventures, and they are numberless. There is one mark which he cannot hide. I have often thought of it, that if once he fell under the suspicion of the law he could not hope to escape. His eyes are different, one of them has a spot of quite another colour in the iris. I think it is because of that, that whatever character he assumes, he wears some style of glasses. Abiatha Broad knew him, I cannot tell you how, but he said that he recognised him when he saw him in the stage coach. That kind, good friend is also somehow connected with this mystery, and with that of—Ruth Weston. Oh, Mr. Ashton, if you could find him, and relieve my cruel apprehensions!"

"I shall exert every possible effort. It is fortunate that all the mysteries appear to hang upon one knot. The first movement seems, however, to be a prompt examination of the records at Woxley Chapel, that you may know positively the sex of the infant who was sent away to the nurse."

"And then we must find Mark," said Mabel, "he may be able to remember more than I have done."

"It is not Mark, it is you who are my child," said the Countess Grace, wistfully, "child, child, does not your heart respond to mine?"

"It seems too blissful for possibility," sobbed Mabel.

And presently she crept nearer to Morley Ashton, and looked up imploringly into his face.

"And your own trouble, Mr. Ashton, oh, you will let it rest awhile? You will not give it to the world yet?"

"I will wait a little. I certainly do not wish to hinder my usefulness in this mission," he answered. "I shall abide by Mark's wishes. It is his right to decide; but don't you see the thing is complicated now? If Mark be the son of the countess, he is not the heir of Paul Barker, nor the son of poor Alice, as he believes himself."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel, catching her breath, while a rapturous, luminous glow illuminated her face, "if it might be I—if I might be the one who owned Holly Bank!"

He took her hand, and bent down to look in her face.

"And what then, Mabel—what then, sweet Mabel?"

"You should have it just the same. I would have no restitution, no confession, no exposure to the world."

He looked at her with almost solemn tenderness. "But, beloved, the flaw would be there. How could you help it?"

He touched the signet ring as he spoke.

"You should have it covered with a band of gold," she answered, vehemently, "as one hides a scar, or a mark like this."

And she pushed to its place the band of velvet.

"Sweet pleader, generous judge! And that band of gold, should it typify a forgiving love? Should it mean, Mabel, a wedding-ring?"

She dropped her eyes, and the soft colour crept over her face, and the answer came in so low a whisper he could scarcely catch it.

"Anything, Morley, anything that would save you, and keep you in your noble position before the world."

"If only Mark Daly would come," broke in Lady Constance, with a sigh, for somehow she had a dim suspicion that he could comfort Ada Donnithorne for the broken engagement which it was plain to see was at hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE three women breakfasted alone. Morley had risen before light, and gone off post haste to Woxley Chapel. He left a written entreaty that none of them should venture out of the house, or discuss before the servants the grave discoveries which had been made. It was a dreary waiting for his return; but at a little before midnight he made his appearance, and came up directly in his travelling suit, dusty as it was, where they sat, in a silent, but thrillingly attentive group.

The countess crossed the room, and stretched out her hand, the dry, cold lips in vain waiting to ask the question which had been all day in her agonised mind. Mabel's pale face and elegant eyes made their appeal also.

He was deeply touched, and his voice was husky and tremulous as he said:

"Dear friends, I have no news whatever, tantalising as it must be. That wretched register is missing, the large long page has been cut out from the book."

"It is part of the conspiracy—it is done that I shall not be able to prove my daughter's identity!" cried the countess, fiercely.

"I have looked closely into the matter," he returned; "the man has had the same charge for a dozen years, and he takes his oath that the other section told him about this missing leaf, and its strange disappearance, when he gave up the registers."

The countess clasped Mabel in her arms, bursting into a flood of tears, while she cried:

"I do not care, I do not care. My heart holds a register that will not be denied, that cannot be stolen. She is mine, my child!"

Mabel mingled her tears with those of the unhappy lady.

"At least," she said, "we may hope for some light from Mark. Oh, if Mark will only come!"

"I have sent a message to him," said Morley Ashton, "and I think we shall see him to-morrow. I have also seen your lawyers, Lady Grace. They are certainly completely panic-stricken. The man's boldness seems, in their estimation, to prove his freedom from concern at any refutation you can bring. The proofs he presented are really formidable."

"What are they?" asked the lady, in a stern voice. Morley hesitated, and glanced uneasily into her face.

"Speak out," she exclaimed, authoritatively; "it is too late for me to plead any womanly scruples. Heaven pity me! I know better than anyone can tell me, what was my father's character. You need not choose your words charily, thinking to spare my feelings."

"There seems to be no question but that he had contracted a sort of marriage, whether legal or otherwise, with a woman named Amelia Boynton; that marriage was previous to that of your mother."

"Yes," answered the countess, drearily; "I have heard him taunt my poor mother with the fact, but he never went so far as to hint that the woman was alive, or that there were any children. If it had been so, he would have been pleased enough to fling the disgrace into her face, as he was willing to jeer at her about that horrible woman and her daughter, whom he kept under the same roof with us, well knowing that he was safe from any harm from her knowledge."

"This man claims to be the son of Philip, Count of Woxley, and this same Amelia Boynton, and he brings all the proofs of the legality of the marriage. It is really registered, although the bridegroom did not give his title, or hint at his noble birth. He brings also the certificate of his own birth, and the proofs of his identity, one of which reminds me of what Mabel told us of her persecutor, that the iris of one

eye has a spot of another colour upon it. I must not conceal from you, my dear lady, that your lawyers have very serious doubts of your ability to withstand him. Their only hope is in secretly watching the man, and trying to solve a certain mystery which seems to hang about his movements. He has made an appointment to meet them, and I am very anxious that you should be there, and especially Mabel. For I am hoping she will be able to settle one question. If this man, who pretends to be James Woxley, can be identified as that same persecutor of hers, it will very much simplify our work. I have been going over her story, and yours, and I confess I am pretty well satisfied that it must be so. Mabel must have a look at this James Woxley."

He saw the girl's shudder.

"What, when that slight hand defended itself against the cowardly brute at the Quaker's house, is its owner going to shrink from an interview where I, and half-a-dozen other trusty men, will be ready to protect you?"

"No, oh no, I shall not be afraid if you are there," replied Mabel, smiling back in answer to his playful rebuke.

A knock at the door interrupted them.

"Mr. Daly, sir. He has sent a message post-haste from London, and the messenger says there must be no delay in giving it to you."

Morley hurried out, without even a word of apology to his companions.

He came back in less than half-an-hour, grave, and with a troubled look in his eye, which could not be concealed from his mother or Mabel.

"More evil tidings," said Lady Constance.

"No, let us hope not," replied he promptly. "Mark is coming down by easy stages with a sick friend. He will arrive to-morrow, and then we can ask him about that singular mark which has its counterpart on Mabel's wrist."

"A sick friend," repeated Mabel, in a very low voice, as he took the seat beside her.

"He does not say who it is, but he says he has a sad story to tell me, and he seems somehow down-hearted; certain proofs, I understand, which he needs, are lacking, and singularly enough, the very page in the register which should substantiate the marriage of old Paul Barker with poor Alice May, is missing. Most remarkable of all is that the church, where he went to find it, was Woxley Chapel, and beyond question it is the very page which the countess needs. So curiously do these tantalising mysteries hinge one upon another."

"If I could find Abiatha Broad, or if only Ruth Weston would appear, it seems to me they would bring the magic key," she answered.

Mark came the next day. The sick friend, whenever it was, was taken up to the room adjoining his, and no one but Morley Ashton knew his identity.

Mark himself was brought speedily before the ladies, but did not help them much. He showed his arm, and there was the mark certainly.

The Countess Woxley, pale and agitated, pored over it, and then brought Mabel to put her by its side. The same design certainly, but seeing them thus, side by side, it became the conviction of all that two different hands had wrought them. There was, beside, a little figure below that of Mark's, which looked like the numeral "2," which Mabel did not have. He himself only knew that it was there as long as he could remember.

His recital confirmed Mabel's. He had been her companion at that lonely farmhouse, whose situation was as vague to him, as to her, until a woman took him away. That woman was Ruth Weston. She had put him to a school, and sent him finally to India as a clerk. She had taught him to believe himself to be the son of Paul Barker and Alice May, and had filled his heart with a bitter resentment of his father's cruel denial of his marriage, and his only child, promising vaguely a noble restitution, when a certain set of proofs were found. He knew, of a certainty, that she had searched far and wide for that missing page of the register, and had sought new for three years ceaselessly, and had not found it.

He had his own ends to accomplish, he said.

There was a daring, unscrupulous villain who must be found. He wore glasses, limped a little when he walked, and was known by a peculiar little hacking cough, and passed under the name of A. Frost, in London. He had set detectives on the track, and hope to succeed, because there was one peculiarity about the man which could not be concealed. One eye had a peculiar, most remarkable spot on the iris, of quite another colour from the rest of the eye.

As Mark made this statement, Mabel gave a little cry, and started up.

"Find him, oh, find him, Mark! It is one and the same, the Rev. Mr. Whitehead, the wealthy Colonel Fulkinstone, James Woxley, A. Frost, it is all one and the same! The same man, I know it is the same man!"

"Then we shall be sure to find him. James Woxley has made this agreement to meet the lawyers. There is only one thing in their description like your account, but all agree upon the likeness of the singular eye."

Mark's face was all aglow.

"If the man be in your way, it is in my power to put him out. The moment we find him we have an officer with a warrant to arrest him for murder."

"Murder!" echoed Mabel, in a voice of horror, "then he has finished the list of his crimes."

"For the murder of Ruth Weston," continued Mark.

"We must all be there, concealed if need be, in the office of those lawyers," said Morley Ashton, eagerly.

And then he and Mark walked away, talking earnestly.

"You understand, Mark, my lad," said Morley, gravely, "why I do not at once take measures to do my share in establishing your claim. It would utterly destroy my usefulness in this matter, and I am vitally interested, as well as anxious to do what good I can, while the opportunity is left me."

"I do not wish you to make any such movement," returned Mark, in a dejected tone. "What proof have I to offer to substantiate my claim? It is all his work, think of it—my own father's work. Ruth told me with what fiendish ingenuity he went to work to destroy every proof of his marriage. He denied my legitimacy. He declared that I was your child, and, indeed, I would it were so. I understand now why my heart has yearned so to you in such melancholy tenderness. Ruth has told me how she would sit—my poor, hapless mother—working upon her pretty embroidery for the expected babe, and tell how cruelly she had been deceived; how noble and generous you had been; dwelling with morbid grief upon the contrast in her life which might have been, if only she had kept so strong a faith in you as to deny, to refuse to believe, the fabricated story of your desertion. Bemoaning and upbraiding herself for being forced, in her strong despair at losing you, into this marriage with Paul Barker, who from the moment of that discovery of your meeting, seems to have changed into a demon. Ruth said my love for you was born with me, and I think it must have been. She made sure that you had found the proofs, and the will; that you had them in your possession, until she somehow ferreted out that you had lost the book, and all her thoughts were turned upon finding it, before you could get it again into your possession. Poor Ruth, I think I taught her to moderate her anger against you."

While yet he was speaking there came a furious peal upon the bell leading from the room occupied by Mark's sick friend.

Full of apprehension Mark darted away, and mounted the stairs, clearing two or three steps at a single bound.

Morley walked back to the ladies, and was there, talking quietly and soberly, when Mark came rushing into the room, his face wet with honest, honourable tears, every limb trembling with excitement, every nerve strung and thrilled.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "it is heaven's mercy! I have found it! I have found it! All this time it has been safely in my trunk, that long-lost, much-sought book. I have found the second volume of 'The March of the French into Russia.' The very one, Mr. Ashton, which belonged to Paul Barker. To think to think I should have forgotten it! And now I have it all, the certificate of my mother's marriage, the missing leaf of the register, better than that, my father's will, and best of all, his confession of remorse and penitence, his written restitution to those whom he has wronged."

"Now may heaven indeed be praised!" ejaculated Morley Ashton.

"The missing leaf of the register," shrieked the Countess Woxley.

"Aye, and the key which unlocks the riddle is also in that confession. The mystery will be all solved. Oh, best of all, my noble friend," continued Mark, jubilantly, "best of all is it, that your good name will now be shielded from any imputation of blame."

And he seized, and wrung Morley Ashton's hand. The latter dashed away the gathering moisture from his eye.

"But, Mark—"

"There is no question about it, sir. All that the world needs, or shall know, is, that the discovery of this book and will reveals an unsuspected existence, that of a son of Paul Barker's. You yield me up my rights as you were ready to do before these proofs."

"What does he mean?" asked the countess.

"I will tell you. Here, at least, I may be allowed to make a confession," said Morley Ashton, firmly. "You remember, dear mother, our sore distress and consternation upon discovering the lamentable state

of my father's affairs. You know, for you shared my terrible disappointment and sorrow at what seemed the imperative necessity of my abandoning my brilliant and promising position. This is what you never guessed, that when I was summoned to Paul Barker's dying bed, I, with my previous knowledge of his cruelty to his poor young wife, was able to make a coherent sentence out of his delirious talk. I knew that he was talking about a will, concealed in a book, and once he told me part of its name. I declare, before you all, I had no premeditation of what followed, when I hurried off to Holly Bank for the woman upon whose name he called so piteously. But when they put me in the private room of the dying owner, and left me there to wait for the woman to make herself ready, I think some demon put it into my thoughts to look for such a book. I found it readily, and was just exploring with my guilty finger under the covering, when someone crossed from out a small ante-room, and passed through the room.

Scarcely knowing what I was about, I slipped the book into the wide pocket of my outer coat. I do not think I was fairly conscious of what I was doing, I had only the thought that undoubtedly the will was there, and it needed to be taken care of. Before there was farther opportunity to examine, Ruth Weston was ready, and I went with her to the dying bed. When Paul Barker was dead, I heard the whispers around with regard to my being the heir to his rich possessions as next of kin. All the advantage I gained, the great hopes, the grand schemes, the good I would do, the joy of my mother, reassembled before me in dazzling attractions, and on the other side frowned and threatened the calamities, losses, and struggles I must endure without a fortune.

"I knew the will was there, and I knew also that it did not give to me this coveted prize, for I understood well enough the jealous hatred with which he had regarded me. I said to myself, some already generously-dowered institution would obtain the money. I was sure it could nowhere else be such a blessed relief. I yielded to the temptation. I put the book among the pile of old pamphlets and rubbish, which I was pretty sure would be unlikely to attract anyone's curiosity, without examining it at all. I said I would not know for a certainty whether it was of much account to anyone. I allowed them to pronounce me to be the heir. I accepted the property, all the time with that skeleton staring from my closet. One day, to my horror and dismay, I found that the housekeeper had sold that pile of books, as I had once given her instruction. I cannot tell you what I suffered, nor how closely, diligently, and secretly I searched to get it back. I remembered the name, but I was uncertain about the volume, though my impression was that it was the first. That woman, Ruth Weston, came to me one day and asked me what I had done with the book I took from her late master's table. I saw in her eye that she suspected me, and that was another agony, but she took alarm and fled. From that day to this I have sought in secret, and agonised and repented, if ever a man repented. Thank heaven it is over now! The rightful heir will have his own, and my sin has found me out."

Lady Constance came to throw herself, weeping bitterly, upon his shoulder.

Mabel looked up with wet and sympathising eyes, and Mark seized his hand, and wrung it in silence.

"Well," he said at length, conquering his agitation, though his voice was still husky, "we shall have good reason now to be present when Mr. James Woxley makes good his claim. I think, my friends, there will none of us be absent."

(To be continued.)

SOMETIMES SAPPHIRE SOMETIMES PALE.

BY J. R. LITTLEPAGE.

CHAPTER XXIX.

And now he came to a horrible rift,
All in the rock's dark side,
A bleak and blasted oak's o'erspread
The cavern yawning wide.

Edgar Allan Poe's Gondoline.

It was a horrible sensation, that of being alone, a prisoner of that fearful darkness. The atmosphere was so thick that breathing was a species of labour. Earshaw, groping with outstretched arms, hands spread wide, no clue, however faint, to guide him either by sound or sight towards life and freedom, felt his heart sink with a sick despondency, while the full horror of his position forced itself upon his mind with incontrovertible force.

He remembered that he had heard it stated as a fact by somebody, that in total darkness a human

creature was almost certain to wander away from the point which he desired to reach. If this were true, why then he, Earnshaw, had wandered away from the wall through which he had entered, and should he attempt to find it again he would only wander into greater and more impenetrable solitude.

He cast himself down upon the ground at this juncture, and offered up a prayer to heaven for guidance in the perplexity and peril which surrounded him.

"It may be a long subterranean passage," thought Earnshaw, "and it is just possible that in this darkness I may never find the means of egress, and of course in progress of time I must starve to death."

Earnshaw prayed then a short, heartfelt prayer. He was calm enough in the main, calm enough to meet death, if such were heaven's will, but he felt the natural human clinging to existence which is inherent to us all.

Hardly had the last words of his petition died away on his lips when he perceived a bluish light in the far black distance of the cave. This light approached slowly, growing bigger as it advanced. Presently it stopped at some considerable distance from him, and immediately after he heard distinctly the sound as if of a spade turning up the hard earth.

Was that unnatural being who had beguiled him into entering the vault digging a grave for the tutor? The young man was far too courageous to fear the thing, notwithstanding that its strength seemed supernatural, and its cunning diabolical; at the same time he resolved to approach it cautiously.

Very stealthily, and upon his hands and knees, did Earnshaw creep towards the dimly-burning light. Upon his being able to follow it depended his one hope of escape from the loathsome prison.

Soon he was almost within arms' reach of the creature which had haunted the mansion of Dungarvon for so long. Yes, it was turning up the earth with a spade, that unnatural-looking being, with the wild hair and the unearthly eyes.

Earnshaw lay still and watched it curiously. A lamp was standing at some little distance from the being, which Earnshaw hesitated to call a man. It was an oil lamp of somewhat modern manufacture; the light burned steadily through the darkness of the vault.

The creature with wild eyes looked round him into the darkness where Earnshaw crouched, and he made horrible grimaces, then he laughed; presently he began to sing, but what a dismal chant, what a hoarse raven-like croak! He drove the spade energetically into the ground as he sang. He was like some evil gravedigger rejoicing over his grim task.

"For whom is he preparing a grave?" thought Earnshaw.

But soon it appeared that the creature was disintering, not burying. His spade hit against a hard substance, and with some effort he raised it, then lifted it up and placed it flat in the full glare of the light.

The heart of the watcher gave a great leap when he saw the object which the wild-looking creature had been at such pains to bring to the light. It was a flat box of metal, either tin or iron.

Instinctively Earnshaw became convinced that he was looking at that very box which his poor mother had brought into the office of the solicitor, and confided to the care of John Gollon, then an articled clerk, alas! how many weary years ago? That was the box, Earnshaw felt convinced, which contained the certificates of his parents' marriage, and of his birth. And yet, as he told himself, this conviction of his had nothing whatever to do with reason.

It was at Baymouth, a town in a southern county, that the box had been stolen. What should have brought it into a midland county, and placed it in a vault under the ruins of Dungarvon?

There seemed not the slightest connection between the box of Evangeline Rivers and the box of Dungarvon ruins; and yet Earnshaw felt that they were one and the same.

"Now, were I to rush forward and seize it," thought the tutor, "that iron-fisted demon would extinguish the lamp, and I should have the double task of finding my way out from here and guarding the box. In both I should most likely fail. No, I will follow the man, the box, the light, at a cautious distance, and see what becomes of them."

He was a little surprised to see the digger raise the box in his hands, weigh it upon his arms, and then coolly proceed to bury it again in the place from which he had taken it. He sunk it into the earth, covered it over with mould, flattened all down, and then, throwing down the spade, he caught up the light, and fled along through the darkness rapidly.

Earnshaw was upon his track; he had pulled off his boots while he had been crouching on the ground, thus his footsteps made no sound, and he followed the light and the creature who bore it at a cautious though easy distance.

On, on, along a narrow passage, a black, shiny wall

at each side; it was a complete pathway, and Earnshaw was glad of it, since it seemed impossible for the creature to swerve either to the right or to the left, the way was so straight; only it appeared interminable, as though it never would end. On, on, moved the grotesque figure carrying the light, and Earnshaw was close always upon its heels. Then, after what seemed like an hour's rapid walking, the creature paused at what looked like a dead wall, and lifted the light high above its head, as if for Earnshaw's benefit.

He feared now that the light would discover him to his foe. Therefore, he almost clung to the wall, and watched for the next movement of the lamp bearer. Then Earnshaw saw him distinctly take a key from his pocket, a large, smooth, shining key it seemed in the light, and he thrust it into the wall. Earnshaw heard the noise of a lock being turned. How welcome was the familiar sound to his ear. He was close upon the man now, for he had turned his back towards Earnshaw.

Ah, thank "the Giver of all good gifts" for the blessed current of sweet fresh air which rushed upon Earnshaw's anxious face. A door was open, and he could see a patch of sky, with some dozens of stars spangling over it, like diamonds upon the robe of a prince.

Close, close was he now upon the creature who had dragged him into the vault, so close that he almost touched him. The personage stumbled out with the light, Earnshaw followed him, then crouched at once under a projecting branch of a huge tree, for Earnshaw was now among the woods of Dungarvon. The creature shut the door with a slight noise, then used his key, put it into his pocket, glanced up at the moon, and muttered a few indistinct words, finally blew out his dimly-burning lamp, and walked rapidly away from the spot.

"So much for the ghost," said Earnshaw, rising to his feet, and drawing a long breath. "Oh, what a blissful sensation to be once more free and erect under the cold stars; and now let me find out what door this is, like the door of a genii in a fairy story, which opens in the heart of the woods, and leads heaven knows whither."

There was a rock in the woods, a great chalky-looking substance, which Earnshaw had passed a dozen times with but slight notice. Indeed, it had sometimes struck him in a casual sort of manner that the rock was perhaps an artificial one, built up among the woods by some of the Dungarvon family, to add beauty to the landscape.

He was not very much of a geologist, and had taken slight interest in the matter. But now, on approaching the rock, he became convinced of what he before had only surmised; this great chalky cliff was not indigenous to the soil, it was an artificial structure.

Ivy grew very thickly over it, and by dint of searching eagerly under the leaves with his fingers Earnshaw found what he was in quest of—a keyhole.

"So that is a secret chamber, and holds some mystery," thought the tutor. "How, how, in the world, am I to find my way into that place again, for go I must, and find that box. Now, according to all precedent, I should have dreamt of this cave, this unearthly creature with long hair, this buried box, and I have never dreamt once about the matter; but I know that I am going to discover something about my parents, but whether something good, bad, or indifferent, I cannot tell. To-morrow night I will come here again, with a lantern, lucifers, a pick or a spade, and I will patiently search within the cave for the place where the earth is turned up and the box hidden."

Then Earnshaw turned his steps once more towards Dungarvon Towers. It was late in the night when he again entered the house of feasting; the sound of revelry and music floated towards him as he was passing near a side hall, and he could catch a glimpse of the bright hues of the ladies' dresses moving about amid the rich blossoms in the conservatory. He paused involuntarily, waiting to see if the glistening white silk skirt of Miss Lamotte's robe would pass between him and the light. While he stood thus in shadow a light step sounded behind him and a voice, which made his heart beat loud and fast, said softly:

"Why, Mr. Earnshaw, you have not favoured our theatricals with your presence; they are ended now, and supper is over; but I suppose we shall keep the dancing up till five o'clock."

"Indeed," replied the tutor, coldly.

"You speak as if you were offended with me," continued Cathleen, coming and looking at him earnestly. She was paler than her white dress, and her eyes were wet with tears.

"Offended, Miss Lamotte!" returned Earnshaw, looking down at the white stones of the passage, with a gloomy smile. "It would ill become Master Viner's tutor to show offence towards Miss Lamotte of Dungarvon."

"You are implacable!" she said, passionately, pulling to pieces the crimson rose which she held in her gloved hands, and scattering the velvet-like petals upon the flags. "I was rude to you the other morning, but then I was provoked."

Earnshaw had not the remotest idea that there had been any false play, and that there were enemies at work. To him it appeared that this was only another piece of acting on Miss Lamotte's part; that she designed to soothe him over, and win him back to a feeling of security; then, when he was foolish enough to think that he might bask in her smiles, she would turn round and insult him publicly, as she had already done. His heart swelled with indignation at the idea.

"I have been for a long walk; I am in a state of disorder as regards my attire, and I am not fit to linger in a lady's presence."

And, with another low bow, he left her.

Cathleen watched his rapid ascent of the side staircase; then she turned away from the ball-room, and walked towards an open door, which led into a room where some ladies and gentlemen of quiet tastes were playing at cards. Among these was Miss Leech. Cathleen made an impatient sign to her; the lady rose and went to Miss Lamotte. Cathleen began to pace up and down with her the small side hall where she had encountered Earnshaw.

"Miss Leech," said Cathleen, hastily, "I have thought it all over, and I am not at all obliged for the things you have told me about Mr. Earnshaw. They have made me so uncomfortable that I really wish I had never heard them."

Miss Leech bowed, and smiled her cold smile.

"And if you have anything else to tell me," continued Cathleen, "I had rather not hear it."

Miss Leech bowed. She was in secret ecstasy.

"This Cathleen whom I detest," thought the wicked creature, "is suffering horribly; already my revenge has begun."

"And I can't think why you made yourself so busy about the matter," pursued poor Cathleen. "I asked nobody to give me advice, or to warn me about this person, or that person, or any other person."

Miss Leech's delight at the humiliation and suffering of Cathleen's proud spirit was so great that she could not restrain a slight laugh.

"It seems to amuse you, madam," said angry Cathleen, drawing herself up to her full height, and looking wrathfully upon her mother's companion.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lamotte; but really it does amuse me, all this fuss about this paltry tutor, who has schemed to get your fortune."

"I wish you had let him scheme to his heart's content, and kept me in ignorance," said Cathleen.

"Pardon me, Miss Lamotte. I am afraid in that case, this fellow whom I cannot bring myself to call a gentleman would have persuaded you into a marriage."

"And what if he had?" retorted Cathleen, boldly.

"He might have loved me in time in reality."

"Miss Lamotte!" cried Miss Leech, in a low tone of horror.

"Aye," replied Cathleen. "Miss Lamotte is only a mortal woman, madam, with a heart, soul, and affections like other people's; and if she had chosen to barter wealth and state for—for—"

Cathleen hesitated over the word "love."

Miss Leech supplied another.

"For the tutor," she suggested, in a low, cutting tone.

"Well, yes, for the tutor," said Cathleen. "What was that to Miss Leech, pray, madam?"

"It might be much, dear Miss Lamotte; only allow me to hint that if you had been willing to make the heroic sacrifice of wealth for the tutor's sake, the tutor would have sacrificed nothing for Miss Lamotte, unless Miss Lamotte had a fortune; remember the pocket-book and its insulting entries."

"I am not likely to forget it," replied Cathleen; "but I cannot reconcile it with the pride of this man, Miss Leech. He is as haughty as an emperor to-night. I tried, actually tried, to conciliate him, and he turned away from me with a cold bow and an apology."

"Cunning, cunning," replied Miss Leech. "Oh, what depth, what diplomacy. How he must have studied your character to find out so truly the road to your heart." And to her own soul Miss Leech whispered: "I must make the feud between them hot and strong to-morrow. I must now attack him, and tell him how completely Miss Lamotte despises him. When will this game end—when will the truly mysterious Oscar return from his London visit, humble old Lamotte, and marry this girl in spite of everything. But her love for the tutor: that is the only thing Oscar dreads. Oh, how I shall rejoice to see her humbled, married to the paltry land-steward, in order to hide some secret of her wicked old grandfather."

(To be continued.)



FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE BANKER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXII.

WALTER DALVANE was seated at his desk in the insurance office in which he was employed, busily writing. The careworn expression had partially departed, and in its place was a look which told of a relieved mind and comparative contentment. The last few weeks had been the happiest of his life, from the fact that his mother had been more cheerful and less prone to grief.

He really thought that he was to have a quiet time, to be allowed to sail over the waters of life's sea, for a short time, without encountering a tempest. He did not expect that, for any length of time, he could be visited with success; his mind had conceived a strange idea, probably born of a reflection of the past, that he was to be one of care's victims, that three times the amount of trouble which generally afflicts the most oppressed individual would be his to endure. He did not let this annoy him; he lived in the present; he had now an interval of pleasure—would it continue? He hoped so, and leaning back in his chair, he placed his pen behind his ear, and gazed at the wall, as though his future was written there, and he was trying to read it.

His reverie was suddenly broken in upon by his employer's voice, calling:

"Walter!"

He instantly arose, and with a light step proceeded to the inner office.

He was somewhat taken aback when he saw the grave expression which pervaded his employer's features.

"Sit down," was all he said.

With curiosity in his glance, and fearing that unwittingly he had done something wrong, and that now it was to be brought up against him; he drew a chair towards him, and anxiously awaited farther developments.

His employer played a few moments with a paper knife, as if in doubt whether or not to speak, coughed several times, and then, without looking up, said very slowly:

"I don't think I shall require your services any longer."

Least of all things had poor Walter expected this; for a moment, astonishment held him speechless. During that short time thoughts of his mother, her feelings, their home, comfort, all destroyed, and by

[WALTER'S FIRST COMMISSION.]

one sentence, flashed through his mind. Then, trying very hard to steady his voice, he said:

"What fault do you find with me? What is your reason for this?"

"You," returned his employer, "have done very well. I find no fault; you have been honest and faithful. I will give you a recommendation; but I cannot keep you."

"This is all very strange," said Walter, in reply. "You discharge me, and give no reason, at the same time telling me that I have been all that you could desire; certainly your act is not consistent with your language. I should like to have you explain your meaning."

"I repeat, you are all that I could wish. Do not question me; 'twere better that you be satisfied with the answer I have given. Now, how much do I owe you?"

"For one week," answered Walter, dreamily.

"Here is your money, and ten pounds extra, which I will present you with."

"Thank you, sir. All that I wish is what I have earned," he rejoined, with dignity.

"But you will take it, merely as a gift of friendship? I trust you have no harsh feeling?"

"Not in the least. You must excuse me from accepting your gift. Good-morning, sir."

And he passed out, leaving his employer gazing after him with a puzzled expression.

Now that Walter was upon the road to his home, his pride gave way to sober and more practical thoughts. He almost wished that he had taken the money.

"But, no," he thought, "I could not accept charity. I will starve first!"

As the meaning of that word struck upon his mind, he thought of his mother.

"Yes, I could starve; but she, ah, I could even descend to beg for her."

He walked moodily on, heeding not the warm sunshine, or the trees in their full dress, made beautiful by the variety and delicacy of their colouring, which had been daintily and gently touched by that greatest of all artists—nature.

But he did not give all this a thought. His mind was engaged in repeating his employer's significantly uttered, though to him, meaningless words. The more he pondered upon them, the more obscure they seemed to be. He seated himself upon the banks of the lovely river, and continued his reflections.

"Another mystery," he at length murmured to himself. "What can this mean? Is it—oh, is it the phantom that has thus far wrecked my life? Only a few weeks at a time of tranquillity, just

enough to let me taste the sweet draught, and then the cup is ruthlessly dashed from my lips! I am hurled back, trodden upon, crushed to the earth! And when I ask the reason of all this, I am told that I had better remain in ignorance, told, too, that I am innocent, good, and faithful. Why, then, should I suffer? This semi-darkness, this uncertainty, this grim shadow that I know not of, that follows me, and checks my progress at every conceivable point, which comes and goes without leaving a trace of its course, that may descend and crush me at any moment, when I am least aware of it—oh, it is dreadful!"

He was silent for a few moments, and then gazing despairingly into the rippling waters, he said:

"Oh, if it were not for you, mother—only for you—I would end my troubles here! The waters would stay this persecution which follows me so ruthlessly. Only one plunge, and all is over."

He lay back upon the grassy bank, and gazed with eyes preternaturally bright, at the bubbling waters.

"There is rest there," he sadly murmured, "sweet, peaceful, quiet, for ever."

A haze seemed rising before him; a delirious languor pervaded his system; the river, trees, all faded from his view.

Gradually he regained his vision; but what a change had been wrought in the scenery around him. The waters were dark, the ripples glistened with a sapphire brightness that caused him to shudder. The banks around him were one bed of ice; he raised his eyes; the variegated leaves upon the trees had changed to long icicles, while the boughs were bare and covered with ice. The heavens were lurid with murky black clouds; a cold, piercing wind caused him to shiver. One by one the snowflakes began falling, until increasing in vigour and volume, they lay heavy upon his breast, and blinded his eyes. The temperature was frigid, he was becoming numb. He glanced around him in despair. As far as the eye could reach, was one wild, bleak, barren glacier of ice, while the air was made white by the millions of snowflakes. The wind blew in gusts, and whistled mournfully through the trees; the river rolled and lashed the shores dismally. He tried to raise himself, 'twas useless—he was frozen to the earth. Oh, awful fate! The numbness slowly permeated his whole physical system; he felt as if he were losing his hold upon life, and sinking into the arms of death, which seemed open to receive him.

For a short time this terrible apathy held him in its grasp, then he felt life returning; he gained strength and opened his eyes. Lo, what a metamorphosis had again taken place! The ice had gone;

the bank upon which he lay was teeming with verdure, soft as velvet. He raised his eyes; the heavens were one field of azure blue. The golden rays of the sun, and the silvery beams of the moon were blended charmingly together. The different constellations clustered around the two largest planets, and added their light to the already blinding effulgence. The trees were no longer draped in ice, but clothed in the greenest of leaves, where a moment ago hung icicles, was now suspended the richest of fruit. Peaches, ripe and rare, seemed only waiting for him to pluck them; pears of exquisite shape and amber-hued, looked temptingly down upon him; oranges which seemed bursting with the rich liquid which gleamed through their transparent sides, were within his reach; grapes which would distill nectar for the gods, were suspended before him, rich, luscious and captivating. Oh, what a beautiful scene was this! Had he been transported to heaven, or was it earth? or had he been transplanted to some grove, where all was joy, and upon which heaven smiled and bestowed its choicest gifts?

He was revolving this in his mind, when a strain of ravishing melody struck upon his ear and filled his soul with delight. He looked again at the trees. Interspersed among the trees were lovely birds of magnificent, dazzling plumage, which formed a beautiful and brilliant bleeding of shades. As if by command of his look, they slowly commenced a most sweet refrain in concert; their notes, pregnant with power and richness, rose slowly upon the perfumed air; now thrilling, like the voice of delicate silver bells, now rising in volume and beauty, until the very fruit trembled, and the echoes dashed through the waters; louder and more powerful, yet dulcet, they filled the air with the music of heaven. Walter was intoxicated. Like the sighing of the balmy south wind through orange groves, like sustained water rippling through coral grottoes, like the notes of the lute mingling with the music of fair Italia's waters, were the harmonious, melodious sounds, as they slowly receded, until they seemed far away.

He turned his eyes towards the river. The water glistened like one undulating, polished surface of silver. Directly opposite to him the waters seemed enchanted. They eddied and whirled with incredible velocity. Then, for an instant, they paused, and several fountains burst up and ascended gracefully into the air, the drops falling gracefully around, like a shower of pearls.

For a short time this continued; again the waters became comparatively quiet. A moment more, and four of the loveliest of the songsters circled around him, and again burst forth in the most enchanting music.

For a short time this lasted; then, quick as a flash of lightning, a tremendous body of water was thrown high into the air. It resembled a waterspout, such as Walter had seen on the ocean.

He sought to look upon it; but it blinded him with its radiant, dazzling brilliancy. Then upon his rept senses stole a most rare, intoxicating, odoriferous perfume, which calmed and charmed him. His eyes closed, by no power of his own. A gentle, very gentle breeze fanned his brow, the singing ceased, the odour seemed to rise, the surging of the waters stopped; by an effort he opened his eyes.

Could he believe his senses? Was it an angel? What matchless beauty! What bliss to dwell for ever on the banks of this enchanted river! What ethereal loveliness was before him!

Where the eruption of water had taken place, now stood before the young man's enraptured senses a being of hallowed presence. She stood upon the waters. Around her, poised gracefully in the air, were the birds, the drops of water that had fallen upon their heads having turned to diamonds, and forming for each a glistening crown.

Upon the head of the seraph who had thus arisen from the waters, and resting lightly upon her golden hair, was a crown of pure white, which shone and reflected the light in a thousand streams. Her features were the loveliest of the lovely, and wore a look of mild, beaming kindness that was enthralling. Her shoulders were concealed by a thin gauze, of virgin purity, that met at the waist, and fell gracefully to the left, revealing the smallest and most asymmetrical foot that was ever given to woman. He gazed upon her in bewilderment. She smiled; the earth seemed to grow more lovely, the rich fruit dropped, and fell upon the petals of the flowers, the birds trilled forth in increased power and harmony, and every component part of this lovely land seemed to vie with each other in doing homage to its goddess.

She waved her right arm—that white, beautiful arm, cast in nature's choicest and most symmetrical mould—and the music ceased. She bent her glance upon Walter, who was trembling with admiration. He saw her lips part, but that full, rich, mellow sound seemed to come from far away.

"Mortal, why so terribly dost thou shake thy disposition with thoughts beyond the reach of thy soul? Knowest thou not that thy Creator, who made the world, can guard his children whom he placed upon it? Why fearest thou?"

"But my lot is so hard," said Walter, not daring to raise his eyes.

"Thou hast blessings. What more dost thou crave?"

"Oh, let me have money! Then I can be comfortable."

"Thou shalt have enough of it; but I must take thy mother to heaven for the ransom."

"No, no! Heaven protect me! What would you do? Take all, all—even to honour and truth; but save to me—save to me my mother."

"Mortal, in the main thou has spoken wisely. In proposing to thee greater sorrow, is the only way that I can cause thy heart to thank its Maker for the blessings thou now enjoyest."

"I am human—I am weak," answered Walter.

"Thou hast expiated thy weakness by thy words; thou hast a good heart. Thou hast seen the changes which have taken place?"

"Yes," he murmured.

"Knowest thou that the first was night? Mortal, listen. The great Creator, in putting man upon earth, has given him two conditions, sorrow and joy. The first he passes through, that he may issue from it cleansed, and better prepared to appreciate his rest and joy. Sorrow is the purifier of joy—he who goes shamelessly, bravely through misfortune, doubly appreciates the joy; he that falters, turns from principle, dies by the wayside, unnoticed, uncared for, and unremembered."

"Mortal, listen, like unto the above are two more conditions—heaven and earth. As sorrow is the purifier of joy, so is earth the purifier and cleanser of him who finds rest in the home above."

"Mortal, listen! Heaven will give thee strength. But pray to him in prosperity as well as in adversity. While flushed by success, men forget their Creator; when misfortune comes, they selfishly remember him."

"Dost thou not likewise! Listen! thou sawest the change; the next was day. Night and day! Winter and summer! How near they are together, yet how far they are apart. Remember, the summer of thy life must come—cheer thy heart—he just and fear not!"

The scene again changed. The nymph disappeared.

Walter opened his eyes. The noonday sun was shining down upon him, the river rippled merrily on, all was the same. He rubbed his eyes, and pinched himself, to be sure that he was awake. His faculties were fully alive, but he was amazed, nearly bewildered. He had seen these things with his own eyes—what did it mean? He knew not. He had seen all; but Walter Dalvane had been an hour asleep upon the river bank.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WALTER DALVANE stood for a moment on the spot where such strange sights had been revealed to him, and such beautiful music had struck pleasantly upon his ear. He could hardly credit his senses, but yet it seemed too real; he could not doubt it. Then he gazed around him, and it was not until some time had passed, that the powerful influence which held him, began gradually to pale before the stern, matter-of-fact arguments of reason, and then, wondering like one in a state of semi-insensibility, why he had not thought of it before, he came to the profound conclusion that it was all a dream. But such a dream that the thoughts of it were not easily subdued; they lingered in his mind; control them he could not. He walked slowly on, with his head down, so pre-occupied with his reflections, that he was opposite the cottage, ere he imagined he had travelled half the distance.

This dispersed to the winds all visionary thoughts; and his position, his discharge, their poverty, and his troubles rushed back upon his mind, with force redoubled, and equal pain. He strove manfully with them, and tried very hard to appear cheerful, that the news might not be read from his face, by the anxious eye of his mother.

He hurriedly entered the little parlour, but she was not there. He proceeded to the kitchen, and there found her preparing the midday meal. She glanced up, surprised, as he entered, and exclaimed: "Why, Walter, why are you here? Have you a holiday?"

"Yes, and a long one, too," he answered, with an attempt at lightheartedness.

"You do not mean—"

"Yes I do," he interrupted; "my employer discharged me two hours ago."

A look of sadness flitted over her pale face, leav-

ing it paler than before; then she asked, in a subdued tone:

"What cause did he give? Have you not done your duty?"

"Oh, never mind now, mother," he responded, "we will talk it over after dinner."

She, glad that he seemed so pleased in regard to it, and at the same time questioning why, forbore to pursue the subject.

"We have not a very good dinner to-day, my son. I did not expect you."

"Ah, mother, when I am not here you allow yourself no delicacies, nor hardly comforts, but save them all for me. It is not right; if either is to fare the best, it ought to be you."

"You know we have got to be economical, Walter, and after walking and writing, you need nourishing food."

"I know, dear mother. I appreciate it, I assure you; but there is a vital point that you have omitted. You forget that I am the youngest and strongest; again that I have not passed through half the trouble that you have. In view of these facts who ought to have the best? Ah," he continued, after a moment's pause, "you are too good to your son, you sacrifice too much, you must not. For although I appreciate it with all my heart, my love as well as my reason forbid that you should do so."

"I do not care for delicacies, my son, and the pleasure of seeing you relish them, gives me more enjoyment than it would to partake of them myself."

Walter was silent. He gazed at the dear one who sat opposite to him, with a love which cannot be measured in words. Her kindness, her unselfishness, her unwavering devotion, her pure love, all these he thought of, and wondered if earth contained another like her. Then the words of the water-symph returned to his mind and caused him to shudder.

"What is it, Walter?" were her words, as she noticed the absent look upon his face, and the spasm that for an instant rendered it painful.

"Nothing. I was only thinking."

"Of what?"

"A dream merely. I will repeat it to you after dinner."

No more was said then, and as soon as Mrs. Dalvane had removed the remains of their frugal meal, and put things in order, she repaired to the parlour.

"Now, Walter, what caused Mr. Snow to discharge you?" she queried, as she seated herself.

"I don't know, mother."

"Don't know, why that is strange; did he give you no reason?"

"None."

"But you should have asked him," she continued, gazing in perplexity upon him.

"I did, and he said—he said—"

"What did he say?" she asked, his hesitating manner giving rise to thoughts that were most painful.

"He told me that I had done very well, that he had no fault to find with me."

His anxious listener noticed the emphasis on the last word and trembled; he resumed:

"Then I asked him if he liked me, why he did not keep me."

"And what did he say?" was the hasty question.

"He looked at me very significantly, and replied: 'Again I say I have no fault to find with you; enough is it that I cannot keep you.'"

Mrs. Dalvane pressed her hands to her brow, and endeavoured to conceal her agitation from Walter, but he saw it, and quickly asked:

"Are you ill?"

"No, no," she replied, trying to appear calm; "pray go on."

"Again I pressed him to give an answer," continued Walter; "and he put me off with the rebuff, 'twere better I should remain in ignorance.'"

"Oh, did he say that—that! Oh, Walter, to think that you—"

She checked herself, and paced the room excitedly. He knew not what to do, or what to say. Again he had inadvertently touched the spring that opened the flood-gates of her secret grief. His mind was busy. How is it anything this stranger can say affects mother so? She never saw him, or he her.

What awful significance have those words, that they cause her such grief?

Thus ran the harrowing thoughts in the devoted son's mind, as, with the deepest solicitude, he watched his mother walking the room, seeking to control the tempest within. He said nothing, but waited until it should subside.

Having partially regained her equanimity, she again sat down, and for some moments both were silent.

"Do you think you can procure another situation?"

"I am going to try. You do not know how I felt when he discharged me; but I philosophically re-

solved that, come what would, I would sustain and encourage you, and not give way to despondent feelings."

"A noble resolution, and one I will help you to keep," she said. "Alone it would be a difficult task."

"It would, alone. But we shall have brighter days, if we only survive the dark ones."

"Your words do me good; together we will try. I ought to be happy in you, Walter, you are a noble boy."

"You praise me too much, mother."

"Nay, my son, it is but from love that I speak. Think you that empty, shallow praise can come from a true mother's heart," she replied, in an injured tone.

"No. I unintentionally wounded your feelings. You are so sensitive, that even now I cannot always guard against ambiguity."

"I understand you," she rejoined. "But your dream—you have not told me of it yet."

He, therefore, began by stating the condition of his mind previous to his vision, and then gave a description of the latter. He grew quite enthusiastic as he proceeded, but when he approached the point where the fairy sprite uttered those terrible words, he stopped from excess of emotion.

She regarded him fondly, and then said:

"Proceed, dear," in that voice so sweet and tender.

He hurried over the unpleasant part of his dream, carefully only to give everything in its true details, as it was presented to him.

In glowing words he described the scene of plenty, the dulcet music, and the glorious appearance of the earth around him, so that he enchanted the attention of his mother, and she listened with great interest to the repetition of the loveliness and beauty which clothed the objects of his vision; enhanced, probably, by the thrilling manner and poetic language in which he robed his thoughts.

After he had finished, she said:

"Did it not comfort you?"

"To such an extent that I thought of nothing else, until the sight of my home brought me back to real life and its cares."

"Did you perceive any peculiar signification, applicable to each and every state of your dream?" she inquired.

"I can't say that I either did or do. In fact, my mind was so perplexed that I was not in a condition to exercise what little penetration I am possessed of, and since then I have not given it any consideration, until the present time."

"I think I can explain to you its meaning."

"Do so, please. It will gratify me."

"When you went to sleep your mind was much disturbed. It is but natural that your vision should partake of the nature of your thoughts. The trees clad in ice, the desolate appearance of the country, the dark and discoloured waters were symbolical of the present state of your real life; that can be called care, trouble, or sorrow, and it could not be more fitly represented; for if ever earth seemed uninviting and dark, it was then."

"Then came the change from darkness to light. When pinioned down and unable to rise, and thinking it was your last moment, the scene changed. You found yourself free. That illustrated the old saying, often used and sometimes proved, 'That it is the darkest just before day.' Let me remark here, that this ought to show us that no condition on earth can be so low or sad, but that light of some kind will enter if we are ready to see it, for it is hardly possible that all of a person's life must be gloomy, unless they make it so themselves. Then you saw the ruddy and golden fruit; what a relief that was to the dreariness of a moment before. Then came the heroine of your dream. By showing you both the darkness and the light, she had thought that you could use your own discernment, and appreciate your comparatively happy condition; but you, like all of us weak mortals, who do not recognise our blessings, forget about your joy in the change, and desired that which would allow you to live in the light all the time."

"Think of the reply a moment, Walter. Shakespeare must have been in your mind, for you know he says in Hamlet: 'And we fools of nature so horribly to shake our dispositions with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.' The words contained the pith of those, but were crowded in the singular, and in the form of an interrogatory."

"In other words, why so excite our minds with regard to the future, which heaven alone has control of. These thoughts which are beyond human reach, and which 'time lost to ponder upon.' The word 'soul' is the strongest word that can be used, for it is the only part of us which leaves this vale of woe, and the intention of the great Author is apparent, to impress it upon his readers, by the use of that word which has the nearest affinity to heaven, and to say that even the soul, while it remains in the body, has not the power to foretell the actions of our Creator."

"It is becoming very clear; you always enlighten me," said Walter.

"The next was to show you how much worse you might be in the loss of your mother, than you ever had been yet, and to cause you more fully to realise your present blessings. The remainder of the dream speaks for itself."

"I cannot fail to accept this as a lesson, mother, a lesson of life. Can it be possible that thoughts which did not come to me when awake, were roused in my mind and made to take the form of a vision, that I might see my error; and obey my reason, which seemed to proceed from another's mouth, that I might be more impressed with its importance, and give it more attention than if I had thought of it when awake?"

"Yes, my son, that was undoubtedly the case."

"And I think that the thought of it will serve to sustain me in what I have yet to pass through; for, mother," he spoke earnestly and impressively—"I believe the darkest is yet to come. You remember the desolation in my dream was of greater length than its magnificence."

"Yes; but do not be superstitious, my son, for that were folly."

"I know it. Rest assured I shall allow nothing of the kind to influence me."

"But, Walter, where do you intend going to-morrow?"

"I shall go to the city!"

"I do not suppose there is much chance of your obtaining any remuneration for the picture, do you, my son?"

"Very little, I fear," he answered; "but I can only hope if I have any talent it may sometime or other benefit me."

"You are right; and I hope that your unceasing efforts will reap the reward they merit."

"Time will tell. But hark! did not the bell ring?"

"I think it did."

He arose and went to the door, where he found a carrier with a package for him. He signed the receipt, and with happiness beaming from his features, returned.

"What is it, my son?" she smilingly queried, as she noticed the expression on his face.

He sat down beside her, his heart beating with joy, and opened the envelope, from which four five pound notes fell into his lap. He gazed upon her with a heart too full for words, then he threw his arms about her neck and kissed her in the fullness of his joy. She held him close a moment, and then leaping to his feet, he exclaimed:

"That dream! that blessed dream! Mother here are twenty pounds for my first picture, and an order for another. My art has triumphed."

(To be continued.)

THE BLACK KNIGHT'S CHALLENGE.

BY THE

Author of "Florion," "Cordeiro's Fortune," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

It was towards the close of the eleventh century that the Christian chieftains of western Europe marshalled their forces for the First Crusade to the Holy Land; their sacred purpose being to wrest the Sepulchre of our Lord from the hands of the Infidel Saracen. Starting from different points and at different times, it became necessary that they should fix upon some spot in the Orient where they could meet and unite, so that they might set forth together against the enemies of the risen Saviour. Constantinople, the capital of the Greek Empire, was the place selected, and there the Christian army assembled.

In the Emperor, Alexius Comnenus, the Crusaders had hoped to find a trusty friend and a useful counsellor; but instead thereof, they found him jealous, timid, and even treacherous. With a smiling face, and many fair promises, he sought to bend them to his own selfish and ambitious purposes; and a few of them were more or less influenced by his subtle machinations. He dared not openly assist the crusaders, for fear of the Turks, who had more than once already besieged his capital; but he would gladly have enlisted those powerful and gallant warriors into his imperial service, and himself have gained the glory of conquest over the enemies of the Cross. But his efforts availed nothing towards turning the Christian knights from their purpose, though he did succeed in sowing the seed of discord and dissension among some of the very bravest of the western warriors—seed which was destined to bear bitter fruit to the noble knights for a long time thereafter.

However, the winter passed over, and the Christian forces were at length assembled; their preparations

all made for the advance, and the whole army eager for battle. It was a grand sight which the watchmen upon the walls of Constantinople beheld, when that army of one hundred thousand horse, and five hundred thousand foot soldiers, with banners flying, spears glittering like a silver forest in the morning's sun, bright armour flashing like ten thousand mirrors whirling sharp beams of light into the air; the steel skull-caps stretching away like unto a broad sea, with its undulating bosom broken into half a million gleaming wavelets; while upon the soft breeze came the stirring blast of many a brazen trumpet, blown forth with a zeal that sought to impart of itself to all who heard—a grand sight to the watchmen upon the walls, and to those who had climbed to the top of rampart and tower, when that army set out upon its march for the plains of Bithynia.

And be it remembered that the Greeks, when they gazed upon those departing columns, were reviewing the flower of Christian chivalry; and as it is with these noble knights that we have to do in our story, let us know a few of them at the outset.

There was Robert, Duke of Normandy, eldest son of William the Conqueror, and with him were all the warlike knights and nobles of his Duchy. Then came another Robert, Count of Flanders, whose great wealth gained for him the title of "The Lance and Sword" of the Christians; and in his pay were five thousand foot, besides knights and nobles of his father's realm, who joined his banner at their own expense. Next came Hugh, Prince of Vermandois, and brother of Philip, King of France. One of the youngest of all the Christian knights, and the youngest, by some years, of the ruling chiefs, he was yet among the bravest of the brave, and never yet had he met the antagonist who had fairly overcome him.

When the chiefs of the crusaders were assembled at Rome, preparatory to starting for the east, it was into Prince Hugh's hands that the Roman Pontiff had given the standard of the Church. It was a proud moment for the youthful crusader, when he was thus honoured by Pope Urban above the other chieftains; but even then the emotions of pride may have been tinged with sadness at the thought that his brethren in arms—some of them, at least—envied him for this honourable distinction. Aye, he saw it plainly, and it cut him to the heart; for never found envy or malice a resting-place in his bosom.

Another of the chiefs was Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres, who owned in his own right as many stout and well-armed castles as there are days in the year; and the retinue of noble knights who followed his standard were in themselves a host. Next came Robert, Count of Faria, the knight who stood for a twelvemonth before the old church where three roads meet, waiting for an antagonist powerful enough to overthrow him, and found him not.

Of the Italians, there was the thrice noble Bohemond, Prince of Parentum, and there was the gallant Tancred, Prince of Otranto. Another French knight, who might have been the leader of the whole army, but for his haughty pride and his unyielding obstinacy, was Raymond, Count of Thoulouse, who brought with him a hundred thousand crusaders, and whose threescore years sat as lightly upon his massive frame as had sat the years of his youthful prime. With Count Raymond went Adhemar de Montiel, the bishop, and spiritual leader of the crusade.

And so we might go on to the end of the chapter with the names and estates of brave and gallant knights, whose deeds of prowess had filled gaping multitudes with wonder and delight, and who now led their esquires and men-at-arms across the plains of Bithynia; but we will only notice three others, and we present them at this time because they are to play an important part in our story. There were three knights who kept near to the standard of Raymond of Thoulouse. Peter of Bourbon and Arnold de la Marche were brothers, and were among the best knights of the old count's retinue. They were brave and reckless, and could be true when it was for their interest so to be. A boon companion of the brothers was Guiscard de Grillon, a stouter knight than either of them. He was captain of twenty spears and two hundred foot. These three men were much together, and many there were among the crusaders who wondered what it was that kept them so busy in secret conference, and why they so often conversed as though fearful of being overheard. It was all to be known in good time.

The city of Nice was the first place that attracted the attention of the crusaders. It was the capital of Bithynia, and the advance post of the Turks towards the Bosphorus; and if the Christians would keep open the way for their supplies, it would have to be reduced. Kilidje-Arslan, the Sultan of Koon, within whose dominions Nice was situated, in anticipation of the attack of the soldiers of the Cross, had caused the place to be strongly fortified; and as nature had

stone much towards the same end, the invaders found a difficult work before them when they had reached the Bithynian capital. High mountains defended the approach to it; while to the west and south the waters of Lake Ascanius washed its ramparts, preserving to the inhabitants an easy communication with the sea. Ditches, deep and broad, filled with water from the mountain streams, surrounded the place on the north and east, the bridges of which could be quickly raised towards the walls. These walls were double, and were wide enough for the passage of a chariot upon their tops; and they were protected by three hundred and seventy high towers of brick and stone. The garrison of the city was composed of the chosen men of the Turkish warriors; while the Sultan himself, with an army of a hundred thousand soldiers, occupied the neighbouring mountains, ready at any time to fall upon the flanks of the besiegers.

A march of nearly one hundred miles brought the Christian army to the city of Nice; and when it had been determined to besiege the place, the posts were selected and distributed to the care of the most trusted chiefs. The camp of the crusaders extended over a vast plain, intersected by rivulets which fell from the mountains.

Fleets from Greece and Italy transported provisions, and kept the besiegers in a state of abundance. Each nation had its quarters, which they surrounded with palisades; and a reliable historian has reckoned that of these nations there were nineteen, differing in language, manners and customs. In each quarter magnificent tents were raised to serve as churches, in which the warriors and their followers regularly assembled for the purpose of religious ceremonies. And when we remember that hundreds of the nobles had brought their wives and children with them, in anticipation of finding homes in the Holy Land, we can understand something of the life of the Christian camp.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and the crusaders were resting from an unsuccessful attack upon the city. From all parts of the camp came the sound of clinking hammers, where the armourers were busy at their work, and the song of the careless soldier mingled with the solemn hymns of the worshippers; while ever and anon a more startling sound awoke the air, as doughty knights and esquires met at full tilt, in sport and in practice.

On the outskirts of the French quarter stood an armed knight by the side of his horse. He was a gallant soldier, as his bearing gave ample token; while the contour of his body, as he stood there at ease, betrayed great strength united with beauty and grace. His armour was of polished steel, the only ornaments being a few rare jewels set in the gorget, and the silver bars and tall, white ostrich plumes of the helmet. His visor was raised, exposing a face of rare beauty; the lower features cast in a mould as pure as the most zealous artist could wish, while the broad, full brow and the clear blue eyes betrayed soul and intellect far superior to the inner qualifications of the majority of his peers.

The glossy nut-brown curls that clustered about his temples, and escaped from the back-band of the casque, together with the condition of his armour, and the exquisite trappings of his noble steed, would seem to signify that he was fond of dress and show; and so he was; but he never gave a single thought to the outer man until he was full sure that all was right within. If there were jewels in his gorget, be sure they were set in steel that no poor sword could pierce; and if he wore silver bars upon his helm, depend upon it that beneath was a metal fit to turn the point of a heavy spear. Such was the Prince Hugh De Vermandois, brother of Philip of France, and one of the best knights that ever stood beneath the standard of the Church. He was now in his five-and-twentieth year; but as he had been closely practised in arms since earliest boyhood, his limbs were as firm, and his muscles as fully and as toughly developed, as were those of most warriors in his prime.

As Hugh stood by his horse, with his right elbow resting upon the saddle, and the hand supporting his head, he felt someone touch him upon the shoulder, and on turning round he beheld his faithful and well-beloved esquire, Walter De St. Valery.

"How now, my lord? What means this preparation?"

The esquire spoke with freedom, for he was of gentle birth, and had been the prince's friend and companion from early youth; and, moreover, knight and esquire were very nearly of the same age.

"What preparation?" returned Hugh, seeming to exert himself to bring his mind to things present. "Oho!" he continued, as he noticed the direction of Walter's gaze, "you wonder at seeing me thus accoutred."

"Aye, my lord. After the labours of yesterday, I had supposed that you would rest to-day."

"Tush! Walter—do you think I am a boy, that a

struggle like that of yesterday should carry fatigue beyond the sleep of a night? No, no—I am as fresh as though I had not borne arms for a twelvemonth."

"And have you a tilt to ride, Sir Hugh?"

"No, good Walter; I am going out upon an errand; and while I am gone you must keep an eye on my tent."

"Going out! Alone?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Indeed, my lord, I think you are—"

"What, good Walter?"

"It is true, and I will speak it; I think you are rash and unwise. I do not wonder that you are sad and unhappy, and I blame you not for seeking solace in quiet meditation; but you should not think of venturing beyond the confines of our camp untended. The Turks are in the mountains, and they lurk in every convenient hiding-place. And furthermore, you know what Raymond and Bohémound have ordered."

"Ordered, Walter?"

"Touching the going forth of any of our knights beyond the limits of the camp until Klidge-Arsalan and his infidel host have been disposed of."

"In heaven's name!" cried Hugh De Vermandois, setting the shaft of his lance upon the ground, and turning upon his esquire a flashing look, "who are Raymond of Thoulouse, and this Italian Bohémound of Tarentum, that they should aspire to dictate to the brother of the King of France! By my faith! it seemeth to me that good Robert of Normandy, with he of Flanders, and myself, should rather say unto Raymond—thus and so. But—let it pass. Poor Raymond! Oh! Walter, heaven knows I pity him—aye, pity him, even though I suffer more than he."

"My lord," said Walter, his voice broken with love and sympathy. "I know your heart; and I wish others knew it as well; but, alas! they do not, and you must beware."

"Beware, Walter?"

"Aye, Sir Hugh. You have enemies; and if they can find anything against you in appearance, be assured they will make the most of it. You can see for yourself how things are going on. There are six, at least, who aspire to lead the army, and you have spoken your mind so freely that two of the number have been set aside in consequence thereof; and yet they remain leaders of heavy forces."

"Who leads a better force than I do?"

"No one, my lord."

"Then let each lead his own, and let heaven lead us all. As for myself, I bow not to mortal mandate while I am that mortal's equal. But, good Walter, I will say to thee that when a leader is finally acknowledged, the stout Duke Godfrey de Bouillon, will be that man."

The knight saw the troubled look of his well-tryed friend, and after a little reflection he added, at the same time grasping his companion's hand:

"Walter, I tell you what I had thought never to speak to another—or, at least, not yet; but I must have your promise that you will not repeat a syllable of what you shall now hear."

"You have my solemn promise, my lord; and I hold myself bound until you shall release me from the pledge."

"Then," pursued Hugh, "listen: yesterday, when I had gained the top of the outer wall, by the Tower of the Dragon, I saw our men dragging a female along upon the inner wall. I wondered much what it could mean. First, why a woman should have been in that exposed situation at all; and secondly, why it should require four men to drag her away. As I stood there and gazed, all other thoughts for the moment suspended by this strange scene, it suddenly flashed upon me that I never knew but one woman of so fair a form who could bear herself so stoutly. With this flash of thought upon my mind, I cried out, and the woman turned her head. It was but a single instant, for they were descending as I shouted the note of alarm, but in that instant I am sure I recognised the features of one whom we had thought dead—dead and buried beneath the waters of Epirus."

"In heaven's name, my master, say you so?"

"Even so, Walter. When I beheld that beautiful face I was as one entirely separated from the battle, and I started to find a place where I might overleap the space betwixt the walls, when a score of stout Saracens came pouring out from the tower, and I was forced to give them the attention I had meant for another."

"Aye," cried Walter, with kindling eye, "and I thank heaven that thousands of our soldiers beheld the feats of prowess you then and there performed. By my faith, 'twas the most gallant thing that ever was done. We all saw it—saw you stand alone against one-and-twenty of the enemy, for they were counted—saw you stand and beat down twelve of them with your double-bladed axe, before Tancred came to your succour."

The knight could not be otherwise than pleased

as his esquire thus recounted the deed of the previous day, and having thanked him for his honest sympathy, he set his lance in rest, and gathered up the reins, preparatory to mounting.

"Walter," he said, "Should anyone ask you where the Prince of Vermandois is, you can answer them that you do not know; and that you may be forced to speak no falsehood, I will hold my course a secret even from you. But this much I will say: whither I go, only a single armed man may be permitted to set his foot at the same time. So, should I take a companion, my expedition must needs be bootless. I go to seek tidings of her whom we have long mourned as dead."

"Will you seek entrance into the city, my lord?"

"No. I shall seek in the mountains one who hath power to send his messengers whither it pleaseth him."

"Ha! The Old Man—"

"Hush! Beware, Walter, how you breathe that name. Should mine enemies discover that I have been in secret conference with Hashishin, their jealousy might find food for a meal that would burst them. I will return this day. Adieu, my brother; and look well to my affairs while I am gone."

And with this, Hugh De Vermandois vaulted to his saddle, and cantered away at an easy pace over the plain.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HUGH had not ridden far before he was aware that two knights were following him, and from their movements, he decided that their purpose was nothing more nor less than to keep an eye upon his outgoing. More than once our hero drew his rein, with the thought that he would face these men and demand their business; and, if they gave him an evasive answer, he would give them the lie in their faces, and fight them then and there. But this impulse was not long entertained.

"The curs!" he muttered to himself, "I should but disgrace my sword by slaying them."

After a time he determined that he would try a stratagem against them; for they must not be permitted to follow him.

The mountains were now close at hand, the dark, dense line of forest casting its shadow across the way, not twenty paces ahead of horse and rider. Hugh turned in his saddle and saw that the pursuers were hurrying on, and without farther hesitation he applied the spurs, and was quickly dashing away from view into one of the few passes that led through the forest to the mountain fastnesses. That this was not the path which he had originally intended to take was evident, as he had changed his course materially after he discovered the pursuing knights. However, he seemed well content with the change, if one might judge from the manner in which he plunged into the thick wood. He urged his horse on at the top of his speed, until he had reached a point where the path led around a projecting spur of rock, and here he pulled up and dismounted.

"No, good Dominie!" said the prince, patting the beast upon the neck, "let us see how quiet we can be. Not a sound, now—mind!"

And the intelligent animal nodded his head, seeming to understand exactly what his master required.

As quickly as possible Hugh made his way through the thick underwood, his horse following closely behind him, until he had reached a point where he would not be likely to be discovered by anyone in the path.

"Hush!"

This was said to the horse, who gave another sign of assent, and who appeared to watch the path as eagerly as his master did. And they had not to wait a great while. Very soon was heard the tramp of coming horses, and presently the two knights who had followed our hero came dashing up the path.

"We must get him in sight before he reaches the mountain," said Peter of Bourbon, as they brought their horses to a walk.

"Aye," answered Arnold de la Marche. "Heaven send that we may be able to fasten upon him a visit to the Turks!"

It was with an effort that the brave and gallant prince refrained from showing himself, and casting the villany of the two false knights into their faces; but a cooler judgment prevailed, and he allowed them to pass on.

Peter of Bourbon and Arnold de la Marche were the brothers of whom we have before spoken. They were stout warriors, and young, the eldest being not more than five-and-thirty; Raymond of Thoulouse counted them among his best knights, and there were others of the Christian chieftains who held them in high esteem. And, in truth, they had already won for themselves much fame beneath the walls of Nice, where they had displayed prodigies of valour. That they bore enmity to the youthful prince

none of the crusaders knew save the parties interested, together with one or two particular friends. Peculiar circumstances laid upon Hugh the necessity of making no public show of his discovery of the treachery of these knights; but he did not mean that it should long be so. A certain work he had to do, and then it would be time to call his enemies to an account. One reason why he could not, with propriety, take present notice of this matter was, that Guiscard de Grillon, Raymond's chief captain, was leagued against him; and just now he could not bring himself into contact with the old count.

Hugh waited until the two knights had gained a goodly distance, when he led his horse back into the path, and having remounted, he rode out from the wood, and sought another entrance half a league to the northward—the entrance towards which his steps had been directed when he discovered his pursuers. Once in the true path, he pushed on without fear of the Bourbon brothers, for his present course lay towards a different mountain from that to be reached by the former pass.

While the path was level and free, the prince rode on at a round gallop; but as he began to ascend the mountain he took a more moderate pace, until, finally, his beast came to a walk. It was a path he had never before travelled; but one who knew it well had mapped it out for him upon the floor of his tent, and thus far he had found it almost as familiar as though he had known it from actual sight.

"Courage, my Dominic," he said, patting his horse upon the neck. "The table cannot be far away. If our guide told us truly, we must be almost there—ha! What now? By my faith, that smacks of battle!"

He had turned, at an abrupt angle, around a huge mass of rock, while talking to his horse, and as he entered upon a wider path, the sound of clashing steel, and voices pitched to fierce invective, fell upon his ear. For an instant he drew in his rein, partly to listen, and partly to consider.

"Fore heaven!" he muttered to himself. "I hear the cry of the infidel Turk, and his enemy must be a friend to me; and who knows that it may not be a friend in need? Heaven help the right!"

And, thus speaking, he lifted his spear from its socket, and having brought it to a charge, he put spurs to his horse, and dashed up the rough acclivity. A few sweeping bounds of his powerful charger brought the prince to the table of which he had been told. It was a broad, level surface of rock, broken here and there by gentle undulations, affording ample room for the manoeuvring of ten thousand men. To the right, close by where a prodigious wall of granite arose, like the solid battlements of a castle, our hero beheld the combatants, and it required but a very few seconds for his practised eye to take in the situation of the battle.

Upon the rocky ground lay nearly a score of dead and dying, while nearly as many more were on foot and engaged in the fray. The chief figure of the group, and that which sent a thrill to our hero's heart when he discovered it, was an old man, whose hair and beard, white as the driven snow, fell low down over his shoulders and breast. He was habited in a long purple robe, confined, at the waist by a belt of pure gold, in which was stuck a small dagger. In his hands he bore a stout staff, upon which he leaned heavily, as though his strength were failing. Gathered around him were six youthful warriors, clad in leathern armour, each armed with a heavy sword, and fighting with a zeal and fury which was wonderful, considering that they had fought a long time, and were bleeding from many wounds. Opposed to this little band of devoted life-guardsmen were fourteen stout Turks, most of them as yet unwounded.

Of the dead there were two Turks for each one of the Ismaélis, for Hugh had very quickly determined that the white-haired patriarch was the Old Man of the Mountain, whom he sought, and that those who so bravely defended him were his Ismaélian guards, or *Fédais*. He knew that the Seljoucides hated the Old Man (Hashishin), and feared his influence. He was, like them, a follower of Mahomet, but of a different sect; and as he was now multiplying the number of his converts, the Seljoucides trembled lest he should, in time, entirely overcome them.

Not more than a dozen times did the heart of the crusader beat its heavy throbs after he had come into full view of this affair, before he had decided that he would go to the help of those brave and bleeding guardsmen, who were thus covering with their lives the body of their beloved master. Slipping from his saddle, he cast down the lance, drew forth his ponderous axe from its sheath, and shouting aloud his battle-cry, he hastened forward.

For a few moments the appearance of the Christian knight upon the scene caused a suspension of hostilities; but when it was found that he had come to mingle in the fray, the Turks made a disposition of

their forces which they thought would meet the emergency. Six of their number turned their attention to the new-comer, while the other eight again set upon the fainting *Fédais*. But this did not suit the crusader, for he saw that while he was dealing with these six, their companions might reach the Old Man, and he felt, for a time, a remarkable interest in the fate of that renowned individual.

"Heaven save the right!" shouted the prince, as with a blow of his axe he felled the man immediately before him, and then leaped to the van of the guardsmen, and gave himself as a cover for Hashishin. With the small circular buckler firmly fixed upon his left forearm, he raised his ponderous axe and waited for the onset.

And he had not to wait a great while. The crusader's last movement had taken the Turks so by surprise, that for half a minute or so they had drawn back, as though to assure themselves that he was really alone, that they did not gaze upon an enchanted armour, which, like the wooden horse, might open and set free a full company of armed men. But they were soon satisfied that only a single weapon had been added against them, and with a confident shout they advanced.

"Allah! il Allah! hu-hu-u!" was their war-cry, and while yet the last syllable, much prolonged in utterance, hung upon their lips, at least a dozen of them had raised their sharp scimiters against the Christian; but they quickly found that the work they had undertaken was neither an easy nor a safe one. Nearly all parts of the knight's body were protected by his finely-tempered armour, and those few necessarily exposed places, where a sword-point might have been thrust home, were covered by the buckler. And that gleaming shield seemed to be endowed with thought of its own. Let the blows come never so thickly, and in succession like flashes of light, the buckler was sure to be where the blow was to fall; and yet, all the while, the mind of the knight gave direction to the ponderous axe, which his right arm swayed as though it had been a mere toy.

Those unsophisticated sons of Islam had never before met a Frankish knight in full armour, and when they saw that trenchant axe flashing to and fro with an impetus which no weapon they wielded could check or overcome, they began to lose their ardour, and show signs of falling back. One—two—three—four of their number fell with the first four sweeps of the terrible weapon. Here, one more upon the right; and next, a stout Turk who had thought to leap around upon the left, and thus reach the Old Man of the Mountain, fell with his head cloven from crown to chin.

"God for the right!" shouted the crusader, dashing on to the second charge.

"Allah! il Allah! hu-hu-u!" answered one of the seven remaining Turks.

"Saint Michael to the rescue!" cried Hugh, as he split the head of the foremost of his enemies.

In some respects the conflict was an unequal one from the first; and the advantage was upon the side of the crusader. The Turks were armed only with light spinners, having cast away their javelins in another part of the field before the Christian knight came upon the scene; and opposed thus to the iron-handed Prince of France, they were as so many men of straw—not much better, at all events. With a might that knew no fatigue, his right arm bore death upon the blade of the sweeping axe; while his left arm, with thought of its own, held the invulnerable buckler ever ready to take the blows of the opposing blades.

"Fools!" muttered Hugh, when he had thinned the enemy down to five able men, "do you think to stand against a knight who has held his own with six axes showering his blows upon him? Take to your heels and fly, while your legs have strength to carry you!"

Three of the Ismaélis were now by Hugh's side, and together they pressed the remaining Turks back towards the perpendicular wall of rock which arose to the right of the way by which the crusader had come up. Had these fellows turned to flee they might have got off with their lives; but they fought as they retreated, and when they reached the face of the precipice only two of the number were left. The Prince had lowered his axe for the purpose of giving the panting Moslems an opportunity to surrender, when a loud cry from one of the *Fédais* behind him attracted his attention; and upon turning he saw the fellow rushing towards him, and at the same time making a wild gesticulation, as though to call his attention to something above him.

A sense of danger flashed upon the knight, and as he started back for the purpose of looking upwards, the two Turks darted towards him with their scimiters raised.

"Fools!" said Hugh, derisively, "if you are so anxious to die, I'll help you to your choice!"

He had stricken down the Turk nearest to him,

and had caught the blade of the second upon his buckler, when a dull whirring sound struck his ear, and on the next instant the Moslem before him fell to the earth, crushed by an enormous fragment of rock.

The truth was quickly apparent to our hero's mind. That rock had been meant for him. One or more of the Turks who had been wounded by the Ismaélis had crawled up to the brow of the precipice for the purpose of hurling down destruction upon the head of their enemy, and to that end the crusader had been led to advance in that direction. He saw it all; and though this first missile had crushed a friend instead of a foe, yet there was no telling how quickly another deadly messenger might come crashing down.

It was but a moment—only a brief moment—from the coming of the rock to the conclusion at which the prince had arrived; but that moment was freighted with wondrous consequences. Another cry from the guards, loud, quick, and full of alarm, caused him to look upward. And that cry, meant to save him, was the means of his fall. At the very moment when it was uttered, Hugh had lifted his left foot for the purpose of stepping backward; and had he done so, he would have been safe; but the cry, as we have said, caused him to look up, and in doing so he stopped. Again that whirring sound—a blur came before his eyes—an instinct of mortal danger—and as he lowered his head with the idea of crouching away from the evil thing, the crash came. He knew that something fell upon him—something that touched him as with a bolt from the thunder of heaven, crushing him down without pain, and bending him to the earth. He knew that someone spoke in his ear, and that strong hands lifted his head and worked upon the lashings of his casque. Then came a bright gleaming, as of a thousand flashing tapers—a whirl of the brain—the light drawn into circles, revolving with blinding brilliancy—and then came darkness, and that was all. He knew no more.

CHAPTER III.

THE Prince de Vermandois dreamed. Gertrude of Thoulouse had given him her hand, and the day for the marriage had been fixed. All their enemies had been conquered, and only friends were left to bend the knee before them. Philip of France and the old Count Raymond, the bride's father, had united their purses and bought for the happy pair a castle whose surroundings made it a fit type of paradise. Amid flowers of rarest beauty and most ravishing perfume the lovers wandered hand in hand, while the feathered songsters warbled forth, in answer to their words of love, such music as the devout believer thinks will bless the ears of the redeemed in heaven. They were walking thus one bright and lovely day, conversing of the bliss in store for them, when, as they turned at the angle of an elaborately adorned fountain, the earth opened before them, and a genie of horrible aspect arose and stopped them.

"What now?" demanded the prince, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword. "Wherefore this unseemly intrusion?"

"I have come," answered the immortal, "to bid you beware of your enemies. They are not crushed as you think. Many a dark and dreary day shall cast its burden of sorrows upon you ere your hands can be united as you have planned. Beware of the Bourbon!"

The prince started forward to detain the genie, and in so doing he awoke. He opened his eyes and gazed upwards, and he beheld what he supposed was the vault of heaven, with bright stars gleaming softly upon him. Where was he? What had happened? Without moving he reclosed his eyes, and called his eyes, and called his thoughts to his aid.

His dream gave him the starting-point, and he fancied himself in France. No—he had left his native land, and had joined with the Christian army that had set forth for the conquest of Palestine. He remembered the passage to Italy—the stay at Rome—the sailing thence in a ship, and the awful wreck upon the coast of Epirus. Then he remembered how the emissaries of the Greek Emperor had conducted him to Constantinople—how he had remained there through the wet season—how he had marched with his companions-in-arms for Nice—how they had encamped beneath the walls of that city—and how the work of battle had been already commenced. Then he went on to other incidents: he remembered the face he had seen upon the walls of the besieged city! and then, like a flash, came a remembrance of his journey into the forest, his escape by stratagem from the knights who had followed him—his meeting with the Old Man of the Mountain—and of the conflict which had followed, together with the hurling of the rocks from the summit of the frowning precipice. He remembered that he had been stricken down by one of those ponderous fragments, and that was the last.

He strained his thought to the utmost, but nothing could here call to mind since that terrific crash until the dream in the midst of which he had awakened.

"Am I still living on the earth," he soliloquised, in whispered words, "or have I passed over the dark gulf and landed upon the shores of the world unseen by mortal eyes?"

When he remembered how the Turk had been crushed by the first rock that fell, and when he also remembered how the second had struck him full upon the head, he thought it more than doubtful if he were still left an inhabitant of earth.

Hark! There was a sound as of a gentle breeze murmuring through lightly-banging foliage, and mingling with it, in delicious harmony, came the voices of birds tuned to music enrapturing and divine! And the other senses were delighted as well. He now realised that the air he breathed was perfumed with odours at once sweet and invigorating, and that an ethereal softness pervaded it, so that he seemed rather floating in a celestial atmosphere than resting upon a mortal couch.

Again he opened his eyes, and after gazing until his vision was under control, he discovered that what he had taken for the star-decked heavens was an azure canopy of silk, studded with stars of gold and precious stones. Yes; it was a canopy of material fabric, and he felt that he was lying upon a downy bed. But how was it that he felt no pain? He moved his limbs, and he turned his body from side to side. There was a sort of sleepy languor pervading his system, but no ache, no pain.

"Surely," he said to himself, "this cannot be earth. No, no; I should suffer were I in my natural body."

These words were the first which he had spoken, and as he ceased he fancied that he heard a gentle rustling at his side. He turned over and looked in that direction, and his gaze was met by a scene that thrilled him to the soul with enrapturing sense. Two females had just arisen from a seat by the side of his couch, and were moving away. He saw their faces, and he thought that never had earth given life to such seraphic loveliness. No Eastern enthusiast, picturing the paradise of the blessed had ever conceived an ideal half so beautiful as was this that now appeared to the prince's bewildered sense. With faces of transcendent beauty were united forms as fair and graceful as ever the most favoured of the fabled Peri wore. With a quick movement the prince started to a sitting posture, and stretched forth his hand, but the fairy forms had vanished. He made sure that the beatific vision had really faded away, and then, finding that he retained his upright posture without difficulty, he gazed around.

Our hero found himself to be in a pavilion, the furniture and the hangings of which were sumptuous beyond anything he had ever before seen—aye, his most vivid imagination had never conceived anything to compare with it. He had heard of an Oriental magnificence which he had always treated as fabulous; but it was no fable now—no fable, unless this were Elysium, and he had been translated to the immortal shores. Beyond an opening in the silken curtains he saw a passage; and farther on were flowers and green leaves; and he now discovered that the perfumed air and the songs of the birds came in from that direction.

Finding himself alone, the prince resolved to arise and explore the mysteries beyond the door of the pavilion. As he stood upon the soft carpet that covered the floor he found his limbs not so strong as was their wont, but he moved without difficulty and pain. The garments that covered his body were such as he had never worn before. The underclothes were of the finest linen, soft as beaten silk; the vest was of the rarest silk, changing from gold to green as the light played upon its varying surface. At his feet he saw a pair of velvet slippers, which he drew on; and next he discovered, thrown across the foot of his couch, a robe of purple velvet, adorned with gold and silver in patterns like unto those upon the vest; so he knew the robe was a part of his dress, and he proceeded to put it on.

Thus prepared, the prince went out through the flowery passage, and his heart bounded with grateful emotion as he found that his limbs began to feel stronger the moment they were put in motion. When he had gained an open space beyond the walls of the pavilion, he found himself in a garden exactly like that of which he had dreamed. The walks were of pure white marble; the flowers were of the most fragrant and regal kind, sending forth a perfume that enchanted the senses; the trees and the shrubs were of perfect symmetry, some bearing blossoms like pearls, with leaves of silver and gold; while others hung heavy with fruit of every conceivable kind.

Hugh had gone but a short distance, gazing enraptured on everything he saw, when he espied a tiny fountain beneath a pile of marble statuary, which attracted his attention by the golden colour of the

water that flowed therefrom. When he reached the place, his senses were saluted by a new perfume—an aromatic fragrance—that seemed to inspire him with new life and vigour. The fountain was a rare piece of sculptural art. A female figure was pouring grapes from a basket into a funnel, below which were two stout rollers, with a handle attached, at which worked a gleeful boy, with wings like Eros. The woman, grapes, basket, funnel, rollers, and laughing boy were of the finest marble, and cut with the most exquisite taste and skill. But what was the tiny golden stream that flowed from the spout beneath the Cupid's rollers? and whence that invigorating aroma that so ravished the senses?

Hugh was thus wondering when he discovered a small cup of burnished gold suspended from the arm of the grape-gatherer by a chain of the same precious metal; he took the cup, and having filled it at the fount, he raised it to his lips.

Eureka! If the aroma had given delight to the sense of smell, how much greater was the delight imparted to the whole inner man by the first draught! What our hero had supposed to be a golden-hued water, taking its colour from the earth through which it was distilled, proved to be the most delicious wine he ever tasted; and while he was wondering upon the seeming miracle, a hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder, and a musical voice, said:

"Allah be praised for his goodness!"

The knight turned and beheld the same old man whom he had seen upon the table of the mountain, and whom, as he had then believed, and believed now, to be none other than Hashishin, the renowned chief of the Ismaellians, or Assassins. His robe was now of black silk, secured at the waist by a belt of gold, richly studded with precious stones; and his snow-white beard and hair, floating over his breast and shoulders in graceful waves, not only gave him a most venerable look, but, combined with the stately form, the broad and massive brow, and the intellectual fire of the full, bright gray eyes, it inspired the beholder with awe and reverence.

"Aye," answered the Christian, to the old man's salutation; "and unless my belief plays me false, I have reason to cry: 'Praise be to Hashishin for his care and kindness!' Am I not right?"

"I suppose I should cry, in return, 'Praise be to the Christian knight for his saving will and might! Would I be right?'"

"As for that," said the prince, with a blush, "I like not to decide upon the estimate of my own merits. And yet I must admit that, had I not reached you as I did, the Turks would have overcome your guards."

"Yes," added Hashishin, with a shudder; "and I should have been a prisoner in the hands of Kilidge-Arslan—a fate ten thousand times worse than death. But we will not converse here. Let us return to the pavilion you have left. You have had exercise enough for this first effort."

(To be continued.)

JEMIMA'S PLAN.

Mrs. Towers assumed an expression which she, probably, considered that of patient resignation, with a slight protest under it, and said:

"That she was not quite prepared to be trampled on, like grass, by anybody."

Neither her husband or daughter made any reply to the remark, perhaps because they had not expected she was prepared for being treated like bruised herbs, and a little, it may be, because they were accustomed to hearing that very speech at least three times during every twenty-four hours.

Having said that, Mrs. Towers could do no less than lean back in her chair, and with an added gloom upon her countenance, which betokened a tearful shower, observed:

"That she never did have a voice in the family, and she supposed she need not expect to have. Perhaps she hadn't any right; she supposed she was only there on sufferance; it was enough for her to be a slave—she couldn't look for anything else."

Mr. Towers was busy salting his second egg, and did not look up, but Cecilia said, calmly:

"Mamma, dear, I am sure you are having a voice now, only you are wasting it by not going straight to the point."

"That's the respect I got from my children," quavered Mrs. Towers; "their father encourages them in it," and she looked beseechingly up at a bust of Minerva over the book-case, as if appealing to the goddess.

"Now, mamma," said Cecilia, "you know I did not mean to be disrespectful."

"Didn't you?" returned Mrs. Towers, postponing the shower, and speaking with sarcastic emphasis. "I'm very glad to hear it, and I am sure it is very condescending of you to inform me of the fact."

"Oh, mamma, don't!" said Cecilia, not plaintively, but with a certain weariness which would have been understood and excused by anybody who had lived a week in the house with Mrs. Towers.

"Of course, it's always 'mamma don't,'" replied she.

"Well, Dorothea," said Mr. Towers, having finished his egg, "you can reproach Cley any time; suppose we consider the matter of—"

"Oh, certainly! always encourage your daughter to slight me. I expect it—why shouldn't I?"

"But, my dear, she has just told you she intended no disrespect."

"Mr. Towers, do you think I am a fool?" demanded his spouse, exchanging the injured look for an angry one. "Now do you think I am a fool?"

Mr. Towers drank his coffee, and would not say what his opinion on that subject might be.

"Just say so, if you do," continued Mrs. Towers. "I'd rather have it in plain words than in taunts and flings," and Mrs. Towers subsided once more into the martyr, and wiped away two tears from her eyes.

"Cley, Cley! Won't you give us our music lesson?" called out two young members of the female branch, opening the door.

"I'll come presently," said Cecilia.

"Minnie! Lucy!" exclaimed Mrs. Towers.

"Yes, mamma! What, mamma!"

"How many times have I told you not to rush and shriek like that? You're the worst children I ever saw—the very worst, without any exception!"

"Your sister will come very soon, dears," said Mr. Towers. "You ought to remember poor mamma's aching head"—a head that always ached, being one of Mrs. Towers' grievances.

"I don't wonder they're impatient," replied she, with charming inconsistency, "not in the least—it's full half-an-hour after the time! If I've told Cecilia once that I wanted her to be punctual, I have twenty times."

"I'll go now, mamma," said Cecilia.

"I believe," said Mrs. Towers, with much dignity, "we had a subject to discuss; perhaps you would be so very condescending as to wait till you hear what your parents have to say."

Cecilia sat down again, and the children retreated.

"Just tell Cley what you wish her to write to her aunt," said her father; "the post goes out at ten."

"I don't care what she writes," and Mrs. Towers sobbed. "My sister Jemima has insulted me!"

"I don't see how, my dear."

"Of course, you don't—you wouldn't if she pulled my comb out and stepped upon it! I'm nobody; I wish I was dead!"

They let her sob a little while; then Cecilia asked:

"Shall I write to aunt that you don't wish me to go?"

"Oh! lay the blame on me—do! Get Jemima down on me like a fury, so that I may be ill a week after it—you'd like that, I know. And your sisters' lessons, and all—who is to attend to them? Is nobody in this house to have any duties but me, I would like to be told?"

"A week's holiday will do the children no harm," observed Mr. Towers.

"They're not going to have it," said Mrs. Towers, "nor a day's, nor an hour's! I'm not always going to be a slave, Mr. Towers! I can bear a great deal, but I will not be trampled on—not yet. Oh! oh! Not yet."

"I think Cecilia has done very well with the girls," said Mr. Towers; "I believe she's the best governess they've had."

"She has neglected them shamefully," returned his wife. "I have put up with it as long as I can, and this very day I am going to write to town for Miss Gresham—she's disengaged now!"

And Cecilia, quite aware from experience that it was useless to feel hurt at her mother's complaints, smiled inwardly to think her father had succeeded in doing what he wanted.

"Very well, Cley," continued Mr. Towers; "then, as you are not fit to teach the children, and your aunt Jemima has insulted your mother so that you can't visit her, I shall be able to have your help about my books and papers—they want an examination!"

"She is going to her aunt Jemima's," said Mrs. Towers. "I never do speak—you all interrupt me; but this time I shall take my own way! To her aunt Jemima's she shall go! I am accustomed to Jemima's impertinence—I expect it; she always hated me when we were girls. I hope I'm enough of a Christian to forgive her! I'm only thankful I shan't have her conscience on my death-bed—that's all."

"Shall I write my letters, mamma?" asked Cecilia.

"I don't care what you do—you're the most ungrateful girl that ever lived! I suppose you and your father are satisfied, now you've given me a racking headache! No matter what occurs, or which way I turn, there's always opposition and a

discussion;" and it was true there was, for she invariably made both.

"Then, of course, you can't write to Miss Gresham," said Mr. Towers; and that made the lady think he was opposed to her coming.

"I shall write to her," said she, "if I have to tie my head together to keep it from splitting! I shall do my duty to the last; and maybe, when I'm gone, some of you will wish I had been a little more considered."

Cecilia hurried off, and Mr. Towers buried himself in his newspaper, satisfied with the results of the conference, and too much accustomed to his wife's plotting to be much troubled by it.

Aunt Jemima—Miss Denby—was an old maid, somewhere about forty-five, and so unlike her younger sister, Mrs. Towers, that the sight of the two together was enough to make one a believer in the idea that the relationships made by birth are mere accidents.

She was, like many earnest, straightforward people, fond of taking their own way, and easily irritated by petty oppositions, and I am afraid it was true that when Dorothea annoyed her with a more than ordinary stroke of folly, Jemima occasionally turned upon her rather roughly.

The present cause of offence was that Miss Denby had invited a party of young people to her country house. She lived some twenty miles off, in a delightful, charming old house, that, along with the rest of her comfortable fortune, had been left her by a bachelor uncle long before; and the letter under discussion had been a request to her niece to join the number.

She had a particular reason for not desiring Mrs. Towers' presence—so she did not ask her to come. She wrote directly to Cecilia herself, a charming girl of nineteen.

So the matter being settled, except that Mrs. Towers still cherished her grievance at the slight Jemima had put upon her, and performed the part of the fretful martyr, Cecilia packed up, and prepared for a fortnight's freedom from fault-finding; for nothing of that sort troubled the atmosphere of the Olympus where aunt Jemima reigned in absolute sovereignty. If she disliked people, she kept them out of her sight; if she loved them, she was inclined to think they could do her no wrong; if she had to scold—and the best of us must occasionally, in this weary world, even you and I—she announced her displeasure and will in a few trenchant sentences that cut like a knife, and was done with the subject.

Mrs. Towers carried out her threat of sending for Miss Gresham to take care of the younger girls; and Miss Gresham came, to Mr. Towers' secret delight, for she was a woman with brains, and understood teaching children.

The night before Cecilia started, Mrs. Towers brought her some pearls, and desired her to wear them, and took that opportunity to add a few last words in regard to her grievance.

"My sister Jemima may ask after my health," said she, with a tremor in her voice. "I don't say that she will, I don't say that I expect her to do so, but she may; if she does, you can tell her the truth."

Cecilia, being doubtful what her mother might consider "the truth," held her peace.

"I am not so strong even as last summer," said Mrs. Towers, in a weak voice, and leaning against the table for support; "you can say that. I don't sleep; I've no appetite; but I bear what I have to bear and don't complain—nobody can say I do. How long I shall be able to do so I can't tell," continued Mrs. Towers; "but I don't suppose my sister Jemima would care to know if I could. Indeed, I've not the slightest doubt that my sister Jemima would make her prejudice against black an excuse for not wearing decent mourning—but I shall not say so."

"Oh, mamma!" said Cecilia, "aunt Jemima is very fond of you, I am sure; she is so good to everybody."

"She wants to steal my child's heart!" moaned Mrs. Towers, appealing to heaven with uplifted eyes and hands. "I am not blind—I understand her arts; I am silent; I suffer without a complaint; but I shall not say that I am blind. No, no! I shall not say that."

"Nonsense, my dear!" said Mr. Towers. "Jemima is too straightforward to have designs; why, you are always talking about her bluntness."

"Tell me I'm a fool, Mr. Towers, do!"

"Please don't say that, mamma!"

"Cecilia, if my child is not willing to listen to her mother, let her say so; it would be better than trying to cut my words short."

"I didn't mean to interrupt you, mamma."

"Nobody never means to hurt me. Oh, no! Jemima doesn't—it's all my fault! Mr. Towers, Mr. Towers, do you mean to sit there and let my own daughter be impertinent to me? You like it, you know you do; you wouldn't stir if somebody was trampling me like grass."

And Cecilia had to kiss her, and say she was sorry. Things might now have gone well for a while, but Mrs. Towers chanced to mention the name of a young man whom they had known since his childhood, and whom Mrs. Towers held in aversion, because he was liked by everybody else—at least, there was no other possible reason for being ill-disposed towards Fred Voorhies.

"There!" she exclaimed, "that's Jemima's plot; she wants Cecilia to marry him."

"Why, mamma, I should as soon think of marrying my brother," cried Cecilia.

"Nor does Fred want her," added Mr. Towers. "I fancy I know where his heart has gone."

"Mr. Towers, I am not to be deceived—no, not by you and Jemima united. I can see through you both—and I could if we were in a mine—if we were in the Mammoth Cave without any lantern."

Mr. Towers did not risk a jest; so, after a little, she continued:

"I shall ask no promises of you, Cecilia; you'd break it if you made one."

"Excuse me, mamma; I don't think anybody ever knew me to break my word."

"I hope you can say your prayers after contradicting your mother. I hope you can; but if it were me, I should expect something dreadful to catch me by the shoulder—yes, by the left shoulder," said Mrs. Towers, with much emphasis, and a shiver of horror. Cecilia took up the box that held the pearls, and prepared to make her exit.

"One instant, Cecilia," said her mother. "I shall do my duty; in spite of sneers, of insolence, I shall do my duty! When my last hour comes, I may be speechless, and, perhaps, then my children will wish they had listened to my advice."

"What do you want me to do, mamma?"

"Nothing. I shall give you no advice—I never will," returned the inconsistent woman. "I only say if you should come back engaged to Fred Voorhies, I want you, all your life, to remember that you signed your mother's death-warrant."

"Mamma, please, don't get such fantastic ideas! Fred. I like him very much, but never dreamed of the possibility of marrying him; it will make me uncomfortable when I am with him."

"I tell you again, my dear," said Mr. Towers, "Fred doesn't want her. Don't let's fear impossibilities."

"The next thing," said his wife, turning towards him, "will be him not to speak at all, I suppose. If you and my sister, Jemima, could have your way, there'd be a law to make me sit like a Hindoo idol, made of wood. What is Fred Voorhies, I'd like to know?" she went on. "Who was his grandfather?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Towers, "he was before my time—I didn't know him."

"I don't believe he ever had one!" said she.

"Then the question naturally suggests itself, how did Fred get here?" observed her husband.

Cecilia was permitted to go to bed at last, and Mrs. Towers retired to her room; but between her injured feelings and the effects of the fruit she ate just before she went upstairs, Mr. Towers had rather an uncomfortable night of it, I am afraid.

The next morning Cecilia took the train for her little journey; and when she reached the end of it, aunt Jemima was at the station herself, with her pretty pony-carriage, and so full of health and spirits, and delight at getting possession of her favourite relative, that Cecilia felt as if she had suddenly been ushered into a new and brighter world.

"And how are they all at home?" asked Jemima, as the ponies, quite aware who held the reins, whirled them along towards Beechfield. "Dorothea is pining and plaintive, of course, and your father a model of patience. Did she say I had hurt her feelings? Don't blush—I knew she would! I don't want her just now, so I didn't ask her. I've some pleasant people here—all young, nearly. There are the Tracys and young Fuller (by the way, he'll never marry Jane; so mamma Tracy needn't try so hard), and the Lamberts—she flirts beautifully; people say it's wicked; but if so, I repeat, with her husband, I like wicked things as she does them," and the old maid echoed Cecilia's laugh.

"Fred Voorhies is coming. I'm going to invite Laura Herford. I know they love each other, and I'm sure they've had a quarrel—young people are so foolish! And there's old Dr. Long—I vow, I love that man; I told him so at breakfast—how the people stared! Well, and who else? Oh! Miss Granger; I always like to have one old maid just as a contrast to myself."

"Please, don't make me laugh so, aunty."

"Well, who else is there? Oh! Preston Everett—think of my forgetting him! I love him better than the doctor, because he's younger. Don't you remember meeting him last winter in town?"

Cecilia remembered it very well; the old maid's keen eyes stole one glance at her and knew she did.

"And that's all, I believe. The croquet-ground is in splendid order; you shall have Sir Lancelot to ride—Guinevere isn't safe, I'll let Everett ride her." "Why, I thought she was gentleness itself," said Cecilia.

"Bah! you can't trust a female of any species. I do think Guinevere is possessed of a demon; nobody can manage her but Everett. I rather hate him for being able to do so, though."

"That's an odd idea."

"Is it? Not a bit! I hate your men that can do everything, and always get their own way—don't you?"

"No," said Cecilia, bravely.

"You're a goose, then," said Aunt Jemima, and she lashed her ponies, but in her heart she was delighted. She had a plan, and she did not mean to spoil it by praising Preston Everett.

By this time they were at the gates, and as they drove up to the house two or three of the girls rushed out to greet Cecilia.

"Here she is," said aunt Jemima. "Now, girls, bite each other all round, and then be off. I want Cecilia to myself till dinner-time."

"Miss Jem (that was their pet name for her) always insists we girls bite whom we pretend to kiss each other," Lu Tracy explained.

"You do," said Jemima. "You've female instincts—don't tell me? You're kittens yet, but some day you'll be old—as bad as I am! Jane Tracy, that blue dress is very becoming to you. Upon my word, girls, it's against my principles to say nice things, but six prettier creatures I never saw together."

"Ciccy," said one, "Miss Jem says, when she invites a young lady to her house, we may know she's pretty."

"Now go about your business, all of you. Come, Ciccy."

She carried Cecilia off to the bed-chamber next her own; had her trunks unpacked; showed her several new dresses that had been provided for her as a reward for coming; made her lie down to rest, and went off to her own room, and was seen no more by anybody till she appeared at dinner.

For Jemima had her odd half-hours, and Cecilia looked more than ever as Cecil Towers had done in his youth, in the days when Jemima was young, too, and loved him, and nobody knew it. He had loved her—Jemima suspected that now; and she knew that Dorothea had told him stories, and so he married her; and he was a dawdling, dreaming, accomplished, useless man; and Jemima was a busy old maid, too healthy in mind and body to grieve; but she was human. Sometimes she liked to look back and think what life might have been.

The next fortnight was fairlyland, for Preston Everett was more to her than any other man could ever be.

He was past thirty, now; he had lived enough to be heartily sick of follies and vices that are as old as the flood; he had come out towards the light as any soul must, sooner or later, that gets healed of youthful diseases and weaknesses, and grows and develops.

Miss Jemima watched, made no sign, and kept other people too much occupied with their own private flirtations to notice the pair. Cecilia was not, heaven be praised, of the confiding or gushing order; so there were no sentimental outbursts between aunt and niece. Indeed, Cecilia was in that happy stage of her dream when she did not think at all. You know what I mean—it is a long way off in your experience, maybe, but you know. The sky was brighter than that of Italy; every wind came straight from Paradise; and the birds sang, as they did in Eden, the same song, and just as fresh as then. Oh, these lives of ours! This young love!

At the end of the fortnight, Miss Jemima gave a grand gala in her grounds, and summoned all the neighbours far and near. She had to invite Dorothea and her husband; but she vowed that Dorothea should go home the next day, and so not be able to make mischief, which she always did if she had time.

It was a glorious day—what the girls called one of Miss Jem's own days; the arrangements were perfection. Everybody came, and Dorothea also, with her unfortunate mate, and a very pretty piece of faded loveliness she looked still in her pink draperies.

Jemima privately set her old friend, Dr. Long, to watch her, and see that she did no mischief; and Dorothea liked the witty old bachelor, because she laboured under the delusion that he had remained single for her sake, whereas he had always adored Jemima.

And Preston Everett meant, before he went away that night (for the last three days he had been staying at another place, owing to a previous engagement), to tell pretty Ciccy that he loved her.

Matters went on smoothly till he came to her, and wanted to be introduced to her sister, naturally enough, considering that she was Ciccy's mother. To



[PRESTON CAPTURED BY DOROTHEA.]

give her a hint would be to make her guilty of some unheard-of folly—Jem could only trust to fate. She soon got him away; but oh! but oh! when all were dancing or looking on, Dorothea captured Preston Everett.

She had first seen Cicy dancing with Fred Voorhies; she was certain Jemima had succeeded in her plots, and she must pour out her soul to somebody.

Everett had been praising Cicy, and she said at once:

"Ah! it's a sad thing to be a mother! You don't know what I mean—you are not a mother."

He had to confess that he was not.

"I do not blame Jemima. I speak openly to you, Mr. Everett, because you are her friend. Fred Voorhies may be well enough," said she; "I may think him a conceited dunce, but Jemima would say that was prejudice. Well, life is made up of blows and griefs—I expect that; but, oh! when I see my child on that man's arm, I reproach myself for having yielded to Jemima, and I shall say so—yes, I shall say so. I shall not blame her; but if I were on my death-bed I should say, 'Jemima, perhaps you meant well, but your plot has broken my heart; don't let it distress you, but it has killed me.'"

The ground went up and down for Preston Everett; the trees and flowers whirled more swiftly than the dancers; but he knew that he was asking:

"Do you allude to your daughter and Mr. Voorhies?"

"Yes, yes," said Dorothea. "Oh! you have noticed—you have seen. Perhaps, without my knowledge, they have declared the engagement. Oh! Jemima, Jemima!"

At that instant up came Dr. Long, in accordance with his promise to keep watch. Everett went away.

Had this innocent-looking girl been playing with him! Look at her, leaning on Voorhies' arm, her head down, and he talking earnestly (Fred was tell-

ing his troubles with regard to Laura). What a donkey he had been at his age! He got away with all speed. As he drove through the village, he stopped at the telegraph-office and sent a message to town. In a few hours he received a telegram, which was signed by his lawyer, and said:

"Please come at once—business."

He showed that to his hosts; left adieu for the Beechfield party; and the next day, before luncheon, over drove pretty Miss Dangil with the news that Preston Everett was gone—called away by a telegram.

"When will he come back?" asked Jemima.

"Oh, dear! not at all; he thinks that he shall go to Paris early in the autumn."

Cicy heard this, and the room went round and round, and she sat and laughed, talked, and bore the horrible torture as proud women do bear such agonies; and Jemima looked down the table to where Dorothea sat, talking about her delicate health to Dr. Long.

Three days after, Jemima broke up her party with very little ceremony. Cicy had said she must go home; and Jemima, pretending to be blind, had let her go; but her very heart was wrung by the strange look that this new pang, this unwonted effort at concealment had brought into the face of the one she loved with all the strength of her strong nature. But what could even Jemima do? She could not write and tell this man, who had offered her no confidence, that her niece loved him. She had no proof, either, that Dorothea had done the mischief; he might not have been in earnest. She stayed at home for two weeks, and I am afraid nobody within her reach had a very comfortable time of it. At last she took the train and went over to the Tower's place—what Doty had done she must and would know.

Cicy was not at all well—her father was greatly

concerned; her mother was one hour asserting that nothing ailed her, and the next that Jemima had murdered her child; and Cicy was wringing her hands.

Jemima stayed all night, and before her departure it all came out.

"I don't blame you," said Doty, "you are my sister; but I ask you, Jemima, what means this? I confide my child to your care; she goes from me blooming as a rose, she comes back like a drooping lily."

"How could she go away a rose and come back some other sort of flower?" demanded Jemima: "don't jumble up your metaphors. Perhaps Cicy has dyspepsia—do let her alone."

"To me—that to me! Jemima! Jemima! have you no heart?"

"I have something that keeps my blood in circulation—never saw it," said Jemima.

"You and Fred Voorhies have done this between you," cried Doty; "I know your plots."

"What were they, Doty?"

"To have my child marry him. Oh! if our grand-uncle—"

"Dorothea, you talk nonsense at all times, but have lately developed into the most perfect specimen of an idiot I ever saw!" exclaimed Jemima.

"I know—I am not blind. No, no! I saw it, as I said to Mr. Everett."

"What did you say to him?"

"That you had brought them together; that, for what I knew, they were engaged! I meant to expose you. I'll let all your friends know how deceitful you are."

"Heaven grant me patience!" groaned Jemima.

"Why you never had the good luck to die of measles, or whooping-cough, or something, as other children do, I can't imagine."

She went straight out of the room, feeling that she was not safe to stay a moment longer, and out of the house. That night she wrote to Preston Everett, and sent the letter to his address in town—but what could she write? Only a gossiping letter. He was a brute to run off. Mrs. Dangil said he was going to Paris, and she, Jemima, was writing to beg him to do something for her in Paris. Then some more trash about all sorts of people, and finally, in a careless way, the news, as if he must know of the affair, that she had heard Laura and Fred Voorhies were again engaged. She did hope it was true, for they had always loved each other. Oh! these misunderstandings! caused by idiotic relations. How she hated Laura's old aunt, who had made the mischief!

Jemima had done all she could when she had written and sent her letter. Of course Preston Everett was not in town; of course, like a great simpleton, he was wandering away, and the letter chased him from one place to another, and never found him till October.

Cicy was at home; she had been away for a short trip to Brighton with Jemima. Nobody would have dreamed there was anything the matter, for she was a proud, brave girl; but Jemima knew that the brightness had gone out of her young life. She remembered her own days of anguish, and the bitterness towards Dorothea, which she had tried to subdue then, rose up hot and passionate.

But she could do nothing—only wait.

And Cicy was at home, and the world was a dreary place, indeed, for a just sorrow is a horrible, horrible thing; but she bore it well, and she bore her mother's fretfulness, which seemed also to increase, and kept herself from being morose and ill-tempered, and her reward came. To some happy souls it does come, even in this world.

For as autumn approached, and Cicy was beginning to wonder if she could live through its mocking glories without going mad, Preston Everett appeared at the house, and heaven swung back, dazling out of the chaos of past weeks.

So it ended; and when Jemima held their dear hands between hers, and blessed them, she felt that existence had given her the keenest sensation of enjoyment it had left, and was content.

The best of it, and the most aggravating, was that Dorothea flattered herself on having made the match. How she reasoned nobody knew, and nobody cared; but Jemima was not near; Jemima had favoured Fred Voorhies, and Everett had come directly to her, Dorothea, and asked for her treasure of a daughter, and she had yielded her up.

And Cecil Towers and Jemima stood side by side, and saw them married, and turned and looked in each other's faces, and smiled cheerfully; and, in this world, neither will ever know the thought of the other; with each it was, that in heaven everything would be made clear, and the soul be able to speak out at last; and that reflection was the sweetest that could ever come to those brave hearts in this pilgrimage, as it is, alas! to many, many another heart, that bears the burden, and is still. F. L. B.



[THE IDIOT BRINGS NEWS OF THE PLOT.]

THE PHANTOM OF MARION.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREE days had passed since the dread night of the explosion. Three days of anguish to Lady Alice, whose star of life seemed to have gone out, and her existence to be shrouded in the dreary cloud of gloom and despair.

She had just acknowledged her loss, just felt the first pulsations of the divine feeling actuate her heart, and permeate her being with its ennobling and delicious influence—just entered the portals of a new life, when, suddenly and ruthlessly, the object of her adoration was torn from her, and she was cast back from her short dream of bliss to the dark slough of grief.

The last time she had seen Colonel Le Fontaine was in the cottage. She had left him looking forward with joyful anticipation to the time when he should again be at her side. Only one day had passed, and with love's impatience, she was counting the hours which would intervene before she should again see him, when the castle trembled by the terrific concussion of the explosion, and a few moments afterwards she received the awful intelligence that the cottage had been undermined and blown up. This had a serious and debilitating effect upon the fair girl, which was painfully apparent in the slow step, the downcast, saddened eye, and the pale face, with the heart's melancholy stamped upon it.

Since that night, when the first love of her life was crushed, torn, and bleeding in her heart, she had rested but little. Sleep would not come to close those azure orbs; but a wakefulness, a wakefulness of torture, alas, too keen! kept her senses fully alive to the desolation and agony of her position.

When lying upon her couch, and gazing vacantly into the darkness that surrounded her, with her mind excited and her heart heavy with sorrow, she seemed again to hear that terrible thunder which caused the land to quake, to see the volumes of earth and rocks as they rushed through the air, and in the midst of the fearful chaos, among the crushed trees and masses of stone, appeared the dear body of her loved one, torn, mangled, bleeding, disfigured and blackened.

As this oft-repeated picture of horror rose before her bewildered vision, she seemed to lose all power of thought and action, and would lie in a state of physical apathy and mental obscurity—it could not be called sleep—until the returning rays of the orb of day streamed in upon the long lashes, and once more awoke her from her lethargic torture, to dissemble

and subdue her feelings, and wear out another day of repressed and poignant grief.

The sad, languid appearance of her daughter, and the lassitude of her movements, had not escaped the observing eye of Lady Beauford, who cogitated upon it continually, yet with all her penetration, could not probe the secret that lay, like a deadening weight, in Alice's breast.

The same subject was one upon which Lord Beauford had often ruminated, and with deep solicitude, yet could obtain no satisfaction with regard to it from his daughter, who, though sick in mind and heart, invariably replied to his oft-recurring and urgent interrogations, that she was as well as usual, and although doubting, and his fears unallayed by this reply, he would, perforce, remain silent.

Indeed, all her friends felt much anxiety with regard to her condition, and wondered what had changed the light-hearted, joyous girl to the silent, sedate, melancholy woman.

It was evening, and gathered in the drawing-room of the McGregor Castle, were the guests and occupants. For some time not a word had been uttered; a general pensive quiet seemed to pervade each person, which was at last relieved—for it had become annoying and almost oppressive—by Lord Lyndon, who remarked:

"I have thought very often of late, upon the sad and mysterious disappearance of our friend, Colonel Le Fontaine."

Lady Alice, who had been immersed in deep and painful thought, started slightly, and felt her heart beat wildly against her side, as this cherished name fell upon her ear, and it required all her volition to control her expression, that the sharp eyes of her mother, which were fixed upon her, might not read her heart by her face, and resuming her former position, she endeavoured to appear indifferent.

"It is, indeed, a melancholy occurrence," replied Lord McGregor, in answer to Lord Lyndon. "I have known nothing for a long time, which has created so much excitement in our usually quiet neighbourhood, unless it be the explosion. I fear that he must either have been accidentally killed, or murdered."

A shudder crept over Alice's frame, and chilled her heart, as she thought upon the worse fate which had been her lover's.

"Oh, I hope there is no evidence to point towards such a dreadful conclusion!" said Lady Mary, in tones of deep regret.

"There is no direct evidence, except his continued absence," returned Lord McGregor, musingly. "If there has been treachery, it has been well concealed."

"I cannot comprehend how man can become so low as to kill his brother man," murmured Lady Beauford, meditatively twirling her fan, while an expression of sadness charmingly intermingled with horror, wreathed her features. "It is dreadful! dreadful!"

"It is indeed, my dear," responded her husband, gazing admiringly upon the luminous eyes, which emitted pensive glances of mellow light.

"You thought a great deal of the young officer, I believe," remarked Lord Lyndon, addressing Lord Beauford.

"I did," answered the latter. "Unaccountably, I conceived a decided liking for him the first time I met him, which grew as our intercourse increased, and I became aware of his many good qualities."

The conversation had been most tantalising to Lady Alice, and as her father closed his remarks, a deep and involuntary sigh escaped her, which she had no time nor thought to repress.

"Why such a sigh, my dear?" asked Lady Beauford, turning the black eyes full upon her.

"I was watching a little sparrow, and as my father spoke, a cat caught it, and crushed it with her sharp, cruel teeth," replied Lady Alice, inventing an ingenious excuse to divert her mother's suspicion.

"You have a tender heart, my lady," observed Lord Lyndon.

"Have I?" she carelessly replied.

"Speaking of the colonel," remarked young Edward, "I heard of something, yesterday, which may enlighten us."

Lady Alice felt her heart beat more furiously, while she eagerly awaited his next words.

"What was it, my son?" queried his father.

"There was a body—"

The heart of the anxious and trembling Alice seemed to rise to her lips, while, in accents of intense feeling came the words:

"Oh, I—"

She checked herself by a painful effort, and once more tried to be calm.

"Alice, how pale you are! what is it, my child?" queried Lady Beauford, hurriedly.

"Nothing—nothing, but a sharp pain in my side," rejoined Lady Alice, evasively, though her head swam, and 'twas with difficulty she preserved her equilibrium.

Lady Beauford, ever on the alert, and particularly desirous of ascertaining the cause of her languor and reticence, watched Alice narrowly, and noted every change of her expression.

"You have not yet given us the information we are all so anxious to hear," said Lord Lyndon, addressing the young lord.

Lady Alice called forth all her power to support her in this moment of trial, and with teeth firmly set and hands tightly clasped under her fan, prepared to listen to the words, every one of which would cut her heart like steel.

"I was informed," began Edward, "that a body was found some rods from the cottage, in a mangled condition. It is now lying at Mr. Crab's, the coroner."

"Why have you not spoken of this before, my son?" asked his father. "It may be—" he paused, his eye fell upon the pallid face of Lady Alice, and he exclaimed: "Are you ill? Shall I ring for anything?"

"No, no," she articulated in a hard, cold voice of frozen grief. "I am perfectly well."

"You do not look so; pray let me order some wine," he urged.

She waved her hand depressingly, and sat rigid, while it seemed that each vibration of her heart was the last.

"I did not know it until last night," replied Edward, in answer to his father's question, propounded before his attention was drawn to Lady Alice.

"I hope it is not our friend," continued Lord McGreggor; "but, Edward, you had better send his valet immediately to the office, that we may have our doubts dismissed, or else confirmed."

Lord Beauford arose, and left the room.

"I fervently trust it may not prove to be he," said Lord Beauford, earnestly. "He was a good man, and a valiant officer."

"I join in your wish, my dear," assented Lady Beauford, "although, to be frank, I did not at first regard the colonel favourably; but after I became acquainted with him, and saw that he was a gentleman, my repugnance vanished, and in its place came esteem; he was so brave and vigilant during that frightful storm; he did us great service. Oh, I hope he is not cut down in his youth and vigour! It would be so sad! I know of nothing which would make me more happy than to have him enter the room at this instant."

"Lady Beauford, your wish is fulfilled!" sounded that deep, musical voice, and Colonel Le Fontaine stepped into the apartment.

As these words struck upon her ear, in a voice which, to her, seemed sepulchral, Lady Beauford leaped wildly to her feet, turned, and then, reeling with rage, mortification, and hatred, clutched her chair to preserve her equilibrium, while a ghastly pallor overspread her face; her eyes gleamed like balls of fire, and she gasped:

"You here? In heaven's name—"

She remembered that she was acting foolishly, wildly, madly, and by a superhuman effort, she controlled herself and advancing, with a look of glad amazement and timidity upon her features, held out both hands, and murmured, in dulcet tones:

"A thousand pardons, my dear colonel! I was just speaking of you, and your abrupt and sudden entrance quite startled me. I am so very nervous. Words are powerless to express my feelings of thankfulness for your safety. We have been so very anxious with regard to you."

CHAPTER XV.

For an instant, Colonel Le Fontaine regarded Lady Beauford with a sharp, brilliant glance of intense meaning; then, merely touching the fingers of her right hand, he said:

"I am indeed honoured in being held in such high estimation, but am much grieved to cause you such agitation."

"Do not speak of it, I beg of you," whispered Lady Beauford. "I am quite ashamed of my delicate nerves."

Colonel Le Fontaine advanced, and was about to greet Lord Beauford, when they were both startled by hearing Lady Mary exclaim:

"Alice is dead—see her face, so white—her eyes so glassy!"

Overcome by the sudden and violent reaction in seeing her lover before her, when she thought him dead, her nature, incapable of sustaining so powerful a strain, had given way, and she sank to the floor utterly insensible.

Lord Beauford, followed by the soldier, rushed across the room, and, alarmed by the pallor of her face and unnatural looks, the former instantly ordered restoratives; while the latter, with a lover's deep solicitude, stood by chafing her hands and doing all in his power to restore her to consciousness.

Again Lady Beauford had a fruitful theme for reflection, and as she stood imperturbably gazing at the inanimate form of her daughter, her mind was overflowing with disturbing conjectures. As thought after thought met, conflicted, and was cast aside to be replaced by another, and still another, the purple-black eyes snapped, and the heavy, dark brows rolled

down, until it seemed as if they would obscure the orbs beneath.

While thus deep in her meditation, and partially oblivious to her surroundings in pursuit of that knowledge which inflamed her superior keenness, she met the cool black eyes of Colonel Le Fontaine bent upon her with a certain gleam of mistrust. Like a flash of lightning her expression changed, her face became smooth, calm, pleasant, and advancing, she said, in tones of sad interest:

"Colonel, is my darling recovering?"

He darted a glance towards her, that, like fire to gunpowder, ignited the anger in her breast, which for a moment rendered her speechless, then, by a powerful effort crushing her resentment, she drew nearer and tenderly kissed the snowy brow of the fair sleeper.

The colonel gazed for an instant steadily upon her, a sardonic smile curled the corners of his mouth, a peculiar gleam illumined his eye, and then, with increasing anxiety, he renewed his attentions to his betrothed, who had not yet recovered.

At length, after ten minutes of unceasing exertion, Lady Alice revived. As she raised her eyes and saw the mild, beaming features of her lover looking so tenderly down upon her; peculiar emanations of love and joy sent the blood thrillingly through her veins, and rendered her vision capable of perceiving him only. An instant she gazed upon him in mute transport, then her heart's beatings swept every other thought and feeling from her nature, and, throwing her arms around his neck, she exclaimed:

"Alas! dear Adolph! thank heaven—you are safe!"

"Hush, darling—hush!" warned the colonel, tremulously, knowing the destruction of their happiness was imminent.

As Lady Beauford heard her daughter's words, she threw up her hands and recoiled as though the floor had opened at her feet, while her face was pale and quivering with rage, and from between her clenched teeth came the words, like the hissing of steam:

"She loves him!"

For a moment her form shook, and the sharp white teeth grated harshly together; then, by her wonderful will-power she conquered her emotions, and turning towards her husband, said, with slow, ringing accent:

"My lord, there is now no doubt of our daughter's insanity—you saw her acts!"

Lord Beauford did not reply at once, but stood with lowering brow and arms resolutely folded across his chest, while varying expressions savouring of indignation, regret, and mortification, passed in rapid succession over his features, leaving them stern, pale, and determined.

Turning round, he said in a low, firm voice of command:

"Lady Beauford, remove Lady Alice to her room, instantly. Lord McGreggor, will you send for a physician?"

His lordship bowed, and forthwith gave the required order.

As the cold tones of her father's voice struck dimly upon her ear, and sent an echo of sorrow to her heart, she realised that her passionate impetuosity had wrecked her own happiness. As this bitter reflection smote her mind with painful force, the tears burst from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks in pearly streams. As she left the room, she cast one long, lingering glance of speechless love and mute sorrow towards the soldier, and then, with an aching void in her heart, and a dread of the dreary, lonely future she disappeared from the presence of the only one who had ever truly loved her.

Those present and not directly concerned, maintained a reserved, embarrassed silence. They could not hold the colonel culpable for the present scene, but still in the few moments that had elapsed, they had experienced a revulsion in their feelings towards him. He was good company, and could be harboured as long as he paid due respect to their position, and kept within his sphere; the moment he extended these limits, or omitted that deference, he was no longer worthy of their presence. How low, then, must he have fallen in their estimation in not only exceeding those prescribed bounds, but even having the supreme audacity to dare to love the daughter of an earl.

To one of Colonel Le Fontaine's high spirit, this position was not only annoying, tantalising, and mortifying, but provoking, aggravating, and maddening. He knew the feelings of those around him, knew the repugnance, perhaps antipathy, with which they regarded him, and being obliged to remain in their presence it galled him to the last extreme. For some moments he stood with his hand in his breast, his head turned away from his companions, and his eyes directed upon the greensward; a moment more and the situation had become intolerable, and he was about to leave the room, when he heard Lord Beau-

ford's voice in deep, reserved tones, conveying these words:

"Colonel Le Fontaine, will you grant me an interview in the library?"

"I will, my lord," he replied, with stern, soldier-like dignity, and he followed his lordship to the room designated.

The door being secured, and the two gentlemen seated, Lord Beauford coughed, arranged his coat collar, moved his chair uneasily, and then queried:

"Colonel Le Fontaine, do you have my daughter?"

"I will answer you frankly, my lord. I do!"

"Does she return your affection?" asked his lordship, quietly.

"I think, my lord, it would be easier and more honourable to ask her."

Lord Beauford hesitated a moment, bit his lip, and then continued with increasing sternness.

"Colonel, I regarded you as an honourable man. When I invited you to my estate I did not expect you would take advantage, and attempt to inspire my daughter with the *grande passion*."

"My lord, you insinuate that I am dishonourable. If love be dishonourable—if appreciation of a good woman be dishonourable; then I am dishonourable, and pray heaven that upon that basis I ever remain so!"

The blood mounted to the earl's face, and, although he felt very indignant, he checked his rising spirit, and replied, in measured tones:

"Those words are very pretty, but you forget the honourable Beauford does not wish to witness the Conqueror. You forget that your hand flows in my daughter's veins, and yet you presume to love her."

"My lord, I am a man and a soldier, and know my duty to you, my host; consequently my words shall be calm and free from innuendo. I am well aware of the distinction you would point out. I have known the same for a long time, and only too bitterly. Had I not been fortunate enough to meet your daughter, you would not have known the secret that has been locked in my heart."

"And yet you have lingered in her presence, and sought to make her love you; and I fear have succeeded. What have you to say to that?"

"I have to remind you that none were so urgent in requesting—I may say importuning me to accompany the party, as yourself and wife. Respect to your position, and politeness compelled me to acquiesce; and yet you consider me reprehensible for what has transpired."

Lord Beauford knew the truth of the young officer's words, and he liked it not to thus sit and quietly discuss that which caused him so much indignation; yet he desired to be courteous, for he knew his companion to be a gentleman, and all he lacked to make him eligible to the hand of his daughter, was a title—a shallow word. For some moments the earl was silent, and then resumed:

"It is useless, colonel, to discuss the question how this came about. I know to my own regret that it is so. That is sufficient. I may as well tell you that your hopes are vain, and the consummation of them an utter impossibility."

"I understand you, sir; hearts, lives, are worthless at the side of rank and wealth. So be it—and yet you will allow me to see her once more, ere I depart, which will be immediately."

"No, no, colonel!" returned the peer, slowly but decidedly, "it cannot be. You will never again speak to my daughter with my consent, and I think you are too honourable to do so without."

"You are right. Until I can approach Lady Alice as her equal, I shall never wilfully enter her presence."

"I am sorry, colonel, very sorry that this has occurred. I like you, but I need not again remind you that there is an impassable gulf between yourself and my daughter. If I can ever assist you in any way, I will do so with pleasure. I nourish no malice; only deep regret. Adieu, colonel!"

"Thanks, my lord, you have proved yourself a gentleman; accept my thanks for your consideration. Adieu!"

And the young man left the library, with the future gloomy and cold before him.

Entering the drawing-room he bade all a stately farewell, and then summoning Franco, whom he had not seen since the memorable night of the storm, and interrupting the faithful fellow in his joyful salutation, bade him saddle their horses.

"You surely will not proceed to-night, colonel," said Lord McGreggor, whom he met in the hall. "It is very dark, and threatens a storm. My castle shall shield you to-night, and longer, if your proud spirit will let you stay."

"Receive my gratitude, my lord. I appreciate your kindness, but nevertheless, I must take the road to-night."

At this juncture Franco approached, and announced the horses to be in readiness.

Warmly shaking his host's hand, Colonel Le Fontaine left the castle, his love dream over, once again to face the practical, unbending world.

From the chamber window, with her pale face pressed to the glass, and tears streaming from her eyes, Lady Alice saw the form of her lover disappear in the darkness, heard the regular footfall of his steed as he dashed away, each sound of which seemed to fall directly upon her heart, and almost check its pulsations. For an instant she listened with quivering form to the reverberations of the fast-receding hoofs, and then, staggering towards her couch, she sank upon it, and gave vent to the sorrow which was rendering life misery, and fast consuming her delicate nature.

The evening was a dull and unpleasant one; the annoying and unhappy incident had an effect to restrain the mirth and conversation of all, and at an early hour the guests retired to their chambers.

Lord Beauford had been sadly and sadly meditative since the soldier's departure, as he arrived at his room he came to a sudden determination, and turning very quietly towards his wife, hastily said:

"I shall return within two days and by rail, make your arrangements accordingly."

Lady Beauford was pleased; the wish had been trembling upon her lips, and she was undecided whether or not to give expression to it, now the latter necessity was happily obviated, and she smilingly acquiesced.

All that long, dismal night Lady Alice remained upon her couch, vainly endeavouring to tear away the veil that concealed the future that she might read upon its mystic scroll that which her pooraching heart so much desired to know. As the hours passed on, and the solemn stillness grew more oppressive, she seemed suddenly to hear the sharp clink of the horse's hoofs, and could time in dream, mournful accents came the words:

"Away—away—never more to return! Away—away—to the portals of death, and thy heart goes with him!"

CHAPTER XVI.

For the proper continuation and full development of my story, it is indispensably requisite that we recur to a former chapter—the time when the two conspirators had completed the detail of their nefarious plot, and separated upon the brink of the gully.

A few moments passed, and the men had disappeared from view, when a rasping, scraping sound, as if from falling earth, disturbed the quiet of the ravine; and the next instant a face arose above the log, and peered around with angry glances. It was the face of the idiot, who, during the conversation previously transcribed, had been concealed in the valley, and heard and understood the meaning of every word that the two had uttered.

Having assured himself, by a vigilant scrutiny, that he was alone, he drew himself upon the cliff, and at once commenced an exhibition of contortion and calisthenics that were both ludicrous and frightful. Having vented his mirth and spleen by a vigorous exercise of his limbs, he gazed around for an instant, and then darted off at a fleet pace in the direction of the cottage, and paused not for breath until he arrived at the gate of interlaced trees at the end of the long path.

Quickly displacing the saplings, and pausing only an instant upon the inside to return them to their former position, he threw open the door of the cottage, and, springing into the room, to the great annoyance of the colonel and the astonishment of the beldame, he at once began a series of furious gesticulations, wild shouts, and noises, that perplexed even the fortune-teller, who had never before seen him so excited.

"Margery, what possesses the fellow?" inquired the colonel. "He will certainly injure himself."

"The stars could not answer that, let alone cards," rejoined the old woman; "but I'll silence him."

And, advancing, she placed her hand upon his shoulder, and sharply said:

"Idly, quit your nonsense—quit, I say! What ails ye?"

The poor fellow paused, his features worked convulsively—as if his mind were overflowing with what he could not express—and rendered his face actually painful to behold.

"Tell me, Idly, tell me! What's the matter?" continued the woman, soothingly.

He stood silent a moment, while the spasm seemed to distort his features; then he leaped into the air, fell upon his back, and remained for an instant as if dead; then he arose and repeated the performance.

"Two men, that means," said Margery, with a glance at the soldier; and then addressing the idiot, continued: "Dead men, Idly?"

He shook his head savagely, and stretched his arms perpendicularly to their full length.

"Tall men, eh?" interrupted Margery. "Now, Idly, what's about 'em?"

An expression of rage swept over his features, and, clutching a heavy club, he sprang towards the colonel and made several feints of striking him; and so well did he act his part, that, as the stick swung around his head in dangerous proximity, the soldier recoiled, thinking the idiot's acting was altogether too true to life.

Having completed this portion of his mute revelations, the idiot threw himself upon the floor, and once more assumed the aspect of a dead person.

The fortune-teller watched him narrowly, and the gathering frown upon her features showed that she comprehended the dread import of his actions. As he finished, she approached the colonel and said, lowly:

"He means that there is a plot to kill you!"

The sufferer started. "Kill me?" he repeated; and then upon his mind flashed the thoughts of the former attempt; and, after a few moments of meditation upon the peculiar vicissitudes it had of late been his lot to pass through, he came to the conclusion that he was the subject of a conspiracy. Immediately he continued:

"Cause him to reveal more, that we may be prepared to thwart these evil purposes."

"Idly, is the colonel to be killed?" rejoined Margery.

"Um-um-goo-mooch!" he rejoined, lying down and directing an arm towards each of his companions.

"By the stars—but here is villany!" cried the old woman, clutching her hair with frenzy. "He means we are all to be murdered!"

"What is this—murdered!" ejaculated the soldier. "Why has fate taken my strength from me at this crisis?"

"By the prophets, I'll not die yet," screamed Margery. "I've work to do before that time!"

After answering by grotesque motions her last question, the idiot had left the hut. As Margery gave vent to her last exclamation, he returned, bearing so awful a load.

"What is the fellow about to do?" mused the colonel, raising himself upon his elbow and watching his operations with intense interest.

"Don't speak—watch him," murmured the beldame. "He is an idiot, but he knows a thing or two."

Having placed the leaves in a heap upon the floor, the idiot procured some lucifer matches from the colonel's vest; and lighting one, ignited the leaves, and in a moment they were in a blaze.

"He means the hut is to be set on fire!" exclaimed the officer.

"Nong-mooch-ush!" shouted the idiot, as he bent down, grasped the burning leaves, and scattered them in confusion over the apartment; then traversing the room, he clutched every available article, and threw each one to the ceiling in succession; and, having exhausted his repertoire of signs, fell flat upon the floor.

During his singular actions the strange woman had not taken her eyes from the idiot, and as she saw his weird looks, and earnest emotions, the scowl upon her face deepened and grew broader, and at last changed to a look of rage, as the facts which he was so desirous of communicating became gradually clear to her mind. As he concluded, her frame rocked to and fro under the impetus of the violent emotions within, her eyes glittered, her hands involuntarily came together, and, approaching the bed, she articulated in a husky voice:

"He tells that—that—"

"What? what is this foul plot?" ejaculated the colonel.

"He says—that—that—"

"Speak woman!" thundered the soldier. "Why this hesitation?"

She placed her face nearer to his, and continued in low, ringing tones:

"He means that there is a plot to blow us up with gunpowder!"

Wonder usurped every other feeling in the breast of the officer, as these ominous words full of fearful portent struck upon his amazed and excited senses. He was bound, weak, powerless, and raving.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he cried, struggling to rise. "This shall not be, I'll slay them myself!"

His strength gave way, and he sank back upon the bed, while his anger vented itself in a shower of exclamations.

Margery approached, warned him not to attempt to rise, and said:

"Ha, ha, they'll not kill me yet, I—"

"What can you do?" shouted the soldier.

"I can leave this house, and to-night; they shall not blow me up—"

"Where will you go—to the woods?" again interrupted the excited man.

"No; I have another cottage at the other end of the forest; thither we will go."

The colonel sank back with a sigh of relief.

Now that the idiot knew by the manner and looks of his companions that they understood him, and were about to act accordingly, he danced about the room, uttering wild notes of joy and expressing his satisfaction by every means in his power.

In a short time he quieted himself; and comprehending that it was time for action, he devoted himself to assisting Margery, who was very busy packing what few articles they were obliged to carry with them, to be of service in their new abode.

They were favoured with a dark evening—the moon would not rise until ten o'clock, and before that hour, they had sufficient time to make all necessary preparations for their journey, which, fortunately for the colonel would be short.

At eight o'clock, with everything in readiness, they passed from the hut, under the solemn cover of night. Their progress was unavoidably slow, as the soldier was yet weak, and needed the help of the idiot to preserve his equilibrium in the saddle, while Margery hobbled on in advance, laden with a heavy bundle of household goods, which she carried upon her back.

At nine o'clock, they arrived at their new shelter, without encountering any obstacles or having their departure suspected by those who sought their lives.

At twelve o'clock, the very woods trembled, the air was filled with flying earth and rocks, and they knew that the place they had so lately left was in ruins.

As thoughts of the dreadful fate which had been designed for them crossed the soldier's mind, his head fell upon his hands, and he offered up a fervent prayer to the Supreme Ruler, who, through the humble instrumentality of an idiot, had warned them of their danger and preserved their lives.

In three days, Colonel Le Fontaine, having sufficiently recovered to be able to travel, left his peculiar companions, and sought his friends at the castle.

(To be continued.)

THE SIGNAL GUN AT SEA.

On the south-eastern shore of the point that runs out to the westward of a certain bay upon the rugged coast of Cornwall, there used to stand—and in all probability it stands there yet—a small cottage, which, in the autumn and winter of 1846, and for many years previous to that time, was occupied by an old weather-beaten son of the ocean named James Storms, who retired from actual service somewhere about ten years previous to the above-named period, and who now carried on the various operations of fishing, boat-building, sail-making, &c.

The old man's wife was still among the living, and she, together with her husband and one daughter, a fair girl of nineteen, possessed the unbounded love and confidence of all who ever chanced to form an acquaintance with the inmates of the humble cottage.

It was on the evening of the 31st of December, 1846—the last day of the year; and who is there that does not remember that fearful night?—at least, we wot, there are few who at that time lived upon the coast of Cornwall that have forgotten it. The old man had returned from his boat-house, whither he had been to close the place more securely against the driving storm; and shaking the white fleece from his thick pea-jacket, he hung it upon a peg near the fire-place, and then drew up to the pile of blazing logs.

"Ah," exclaimed old Storms, with a shudder, as he rubbed his half-bumbed hands, "this is a hard night for the ending of the old year. Heaven have mercy upon anyone who may chance to be on our coast."

"Amen!" fervently ejaculated his wife, as she drew her chair nearer to the fire. "Come, Hannah," she continued, turning to her daughter, "let's have our cheer for the dawning of the new year. You know we hold our watch to-night."

"Yes, mother," returned the girl, "our supper will be ready in season. 'Tis but nine o'clock yet."

"Well," said the old man, "let's have our supper now, for I feel as though I needed it."

In obedience to the father's wish, Hannah set about the work, and ere long the table was set, and all prepared for the evening meal. But once a year did the family eat their supper so late as this, but for six years past had they made a practice of watching the exit of the old, and the advent of the new year, and on such occasions they had their meal farther into the night. At the head of the table sat the old lady, at her right hand sat her husband, while at her left sat the daughter. At the opposite end of the table was set a plate, and an empty chair, on the back of which was tied a narrow piece of black crape.

For several moments after they had taken their seats at the well-filled board, not a word was spoken,



[TO SAVE OR PERISH.]

but all eyes were turned mournfully upon that empty chair. At length the old man opened his trembling lips, and uttered, in a broken tone:

"'Tis six years since our poor boy was lost. Six nights have we watched the old year out, and his chair has stood empty before us. Ah, Robert, so long as your old father and mother live, no one shall fill that seat that once was yours, and may heaven—have—Oh! my poor boy—"

Thickly flowing tears checked the old man's utterance, and drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, he leaned forward upon the table and wept. The mother and the daughter wept also, and though their lips gave no utterance to words, yet for the boy that was gone—for the laughing, joyous, and affectionate Robert of other days—they sent forth prayers as warm and true as ever went up from the hearts of earth. Their new year's dawn was a scene of sorrow and mourning, but still they sorrowed not in vain, for their hearts were softened by the tribulation, and their souls were purified by the tide of affliction that had thus rolled in upon them. To their humble home Robert had, in former years, been the sunlight and joy—he had been an affectionate and dutiful son, and a kind and loving brother, and when they first learned of his death in the Indian Ocean, a dark cloud settled down over their household, which even the suns and frosts of six years had not been able to dispel.

Ten minutes, perhaps, had they sat in comparative silence about the table—the storm raged without in all its fury, ever and anon sending a shrill blast through some chink or crevice which art had not completely guarded, and the thumping hailstones, as they rattled ceaselessly against the windows, threatened to force an entrance into the dwelling. The old man had gradually composed himself from the effects of his first burst of grief on seeing that empty chair, and wiping his eyes with his handkerchief, he folded his hands upon the table, and raising his furrowed brow towards heaven, he was about to offer his humble petition to the throne of grace. Not half-a-dozen words had he uttered, when he started up from his chair, and placed his hand to his ear.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, as he bent his ear towards the door, "did you hear that gun, Hannah?"

"Yes, father."

"There it goes again!" cried Storms, as the dull report of a distant signal gun came breaking through the roar of the howling tempest.

"There's danger on our coast. Get my lamp, Hannah; and you, wife, bring my tar-kettle from the porch. I'm afraid I shall never be able to light the signal on the cliff; but, at all events, I'll try."

In a few moments the old man was muffled up for the duty he had in hand, and with the kettle in one hand and the lantern in the other, he issued forth. The storm was indeed terrific, but with a noble purpose the sturdy old coastman breasted its fury and made his way as fast as possible up to the top of an overhanging cliff, which reared aloft its barren peak above the storm-dashed breakers below. On this cliff was erected a rude structure—the work of his own hands—which had been expressly formed for the purpose of enabling him to light his signal when the wind was too fierce without, and into this he at once made his way. The furious blast had torn the rough door from its leathern hinges, but with an old piece of sail which happened to lie rolled up in one corner, he managed so to protect the entrance that he was enabled to set fire to the tar; and, as he had added a considerable quantity of spirits of turpentine, the bright flame shot up like a flash the moment it came into contact with the fire.

In a few minutes the blazing mass was removed to the brow of the cliff, and though the howling wind and driving hail seemed to threaten instant annihilation to the old man's signal, yet it flamed forth a brilliant light, and the report of three guns, which came in quick succession over the driven sea, plainly indicated that they on board the struggling vessel had seen it, and that they also understood its import.

For fifteen minutes did old Storms stand upon the cliff, endeavouring to peer through the gloom to where the devoted bark seemed to be, and at the end of that time he made her out. She was a brig, not more than two cables' length from the shore, and as she was driving stern in, it was evident that she had her anchors out ahead. The phosphorescence of the foam-crested sea and the reflecting power of the hail seemed to throw considerable light over the scene, and the old man was ere long enabled to make out distinctly the exact situation of the brig. From her yards and stays were snapping and fluttering the remnants of her sails, but not an inch of canvass was there left that could be set, all having been blown from the bolt-ropes in the vain attempts to lay the vessel to. The starboard anchor was out, while the dangling end of the larboard cable told plainly that its anchor had gone; but the remaining one did no good, for it had no power against the gigantic strength of the driving wind.

The beacon light had gone out, and for a short time the old man stood undecided what to do. In ten minutes, at the farthest, the brig must strike upon the rocks, and then—heaven have mercy upon the crew!

"The poor fellows shall have the risk of my life,

at any rate," exclaimed the hardy coastman, with sudden energy, as he darted down from the rock, and made towards the house. "Hannah," he cried, as he reached the door-step, upon which his wife and daughter were standing, "run to the boat-house and bring me the new harpoon line. Quick, now, for in a few minutes more it may be too late."

"But you surely are not going to venture out."

"Venture?" interrupted the old man, as his wife began to remonstrate, while Hannah was gone after the line. "There are human beings there whose lives are in danger, and as I hope for salvation hereafter, I'll labour for their salvation now. While I stood upon the cliff there seemed to come a voice, borne upon the roaring wind, that said—'save them!'"

"But your own life—do not throw it away," urged the old lady.

"Then come down and help to save it," replied the bold and determined man. "I want both you and Hannah to follow me quickly. Come," he continued, as his daughter arrived with the line, "come along."

The mother and daughter lost no time in obeying the old man's mandate, for they had bold hearts as well as he, but 'twas for him they feared more than for themselves; the sight of the devoted brig, however, which was now lashed by the spray that broke from the towering rocks, took away all thought of themselves, and with quickened steps they hastened to the shore.

There must have been shrieks of agony on that doomed bark, but the roaring voice of the tempest drowned them ere they reached the ears of those on shore. There must have been prayers, too, but those were for the ears of one who commands the tempest, and He never fails to hear.

The brig was setting in directly upon a large reef that ran out just to the southward of the cliff, and farther to the south of which still, there was a kind of opening, several rods in width, which ran in from the sea up to the beach. Bidding his wife and daughter take the end of the line, and be ready to haul in whenever they felt a strong pull upon it, the old man started out over the reef. From rock to rock he clambered, and but for his minute knowledge of every crack and jut, he must have been washed off ere he got half-way out; but though every step seemed but the next one to death, yet he struggled on, and ere long he was upon the outer extremity of the reef.

On came the brig—nearer and nearer to the place of her destruction—and at last she struck! Again and again did her heavy stern dash against the rocks, and at length, as she lifted upon a breaking, dashing swell, she came down for the last time. With a fear-

ful crash her timbers were rent asunder, and the ill-fated bark had found her grave.

That sturdy old watcher upon the rocks saw the struggling forms of the crew, as they grasped the shattering fragments for support, and with an eagle eye he watched for his opportunity to render his aid. At length it came. Two men, who had tried to reach the bows after the brig had first struck, had secured themselves to a piece of the bent which had split from the cut-water to the forward chain-plates, and together they were struggling with the waves; but alone they could not have saved themselves, for they were being dashed past the point of the reef upon the sharp and jagged rocks beyond.

"Now or never," shouted the old man, as the piece of wreck was whirling past, and with a fervent "Heaven help me!" he leaped from the rock.

His feet struck the floating mass just as it was curling over a broken wave, and falling quickly upon his breast, he grasped the lashings of the two men, and then traced himself for the issue. The surging of the wreck gave the required pull upon the line, which was lashed around his body, and in a moment more the heroic women on shore were pulling with all their might. Each time, as the soul-freighted piece of wreck settled into the trough of the sea, did it tend nearer the open space towards the clear shore, and, at the end of fifteen minutes, it grated upon the smooth sand.

By the time the raft reached the shore, several fishermen, who had heard the signal guns, arrived upon the spot, and more dead than alive, the three men—the saviour and the saved—were taken to the coastman's cot, where a warm fire and careful attention soon restored them to animation. Old Storme was the first to return to consciousness, and as he saw the two men whom he had saved moving with life, he fell upon his knees and thanked heaven that he had done his duty. But he finished not his prayer, for, as the first tones of his voice sounded through the room, the younger of the two men whom he had saved sprang from his half-conscious state and looked about him. For a moment he gazed, and then, tottering forward to where the old man knelt, he fell upon that aged bosom and murmured:

"Father, father—Oh, my father!" He said no more. Other forms bent upon that spot. The mother and the daughter knelt by the father and the son, and together their almost bursting hearts sent forth their thanksgiving.

The clock struck twelve! The old year had gone! Around the blazing fire were drawn the chairs, but they were all filled; and from amid the thousand and one answers that the restored Robert was obliged to give to his mother and sister, they gleaned a knowledge of the manner in which he was saved in the Indian Ocean six years before.

The new year had dawned, and though some there were who lived not to see it, yet within that humble cot all was calm and peaceful joy. No more did the old man gaze in sorrow upon that memento of his supposed loss, for the boy of his love had returned to him, and now was joyfully filled The Empty Chair.

S. C. J.

ADELICIA.

BY THE

Author of "The Beauty of Paris," "Wild Redburn," &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADELICIA LOUVAIN, after leaving the presence of Master Stepmore and her father, hurried to her own apartment—and for a time gave vent to her grief in tears.

She seated herself at the window, where a few hours before she had waved her scarf to delight the heart of her returning lover. Then the skies were clear and beautiful, the sun radiant and golden, her soul buoyant with joy and hope. Now all hope within her bosom was clouded as was that sky of night. She loved Bertram Stepmore fondly; had loved him for years. Indeed, she could not remember the time when this deep and devoted affection began, for they had grown up together from infancy.

She loved Richard Stepmore, too, as a kind and affectionate father should be loved. All her hopes, aspirations, and affections were clustered about Stepmore Retreat—there was scarcely a tree, shrub, or anything animate or inanimate that she did not love, and certainly all animate within Stepmore Retreat loved her.

She had never had an ambition beyond its boundaries, and the intelligence that she was to be taken from it never to return, never to be beloved there as she had been beloved, but to be wedded to one whom she had never seen, one whose very name she did not know.

She sat near the window and silently wept in the

darkness until the approach of a female servant, with a lamp, aroused her.

Adelicia begged her to leave her for a time. The woman withdrew in respectful silence.

Adelicia's beautiful head sank down upon her arm as it lay upon the window-sill, and so she remained, absorbed in bitter thought, until a hand was laid gently upon her shoulder.

She raised her head quickly, and saw the tall, thin form of the merchant at her side, and his pale, careworn face, noble and handsome in its expression of fond affection, bent over her.

A second glance showed her the proud and martial figure of her lover, as he stood near the door. So plunged in sorrow had all her senses been, that she knew not of their approach, until Richard Stepmore's touch aroused her.

"Oh, my dear, dear father!" she said, as she rose and placed her cheek upon his bosom. "Oh, that you were my father, indeed!"

"Not so, my child," replied the merchant, as he smoothed her beautiful hair from her flushed face and brow; "for then, indeed, you could never be the wife of my son. Come, take heart, my dear child. I have been encouraging Bertram, too, for he seemed ready to hang himself in despair. You may be happy yet, Adelicia. Why not? This unknown lord, to whom your father so rashly pledged you, may not fancy you for a wife; indeed, I have strong hopes of this, as I have learned that he already loves a beautiful lady, and the day for his union with her is fixed and near at hand."

"And if he loves his betrothed as I love you, dear Adelicia, he will refuse to wed any but her," said Sir Bertram, passionately.

"Ah, then, you know who he is?" exclaimed Adelicia, as her eyes, sparkling with joy, returned the love-glance of her betrothed.

"Bertram does not know, my child, but I do. Your father does not wish me to make known to you the name of the gentleman at present. But you must immediately prepare for flight from England. Lord Charles Gray—you remember that Bertram wrote us how he had saved the life of a young gentleman in Ireland? Lord Charles Gray, who is that nobleman, and whom Bertram highly esteems, has fortunately arrived, and has consented to escort you to Dumfries, in Scotland. You must fly to escape the schemes of Sir Otto Dare. At Dumfries you will be met by your father, Bertram, and me, or certainly by one of us; or should aught occur to prevent our meeting you, some one from us will represent us. Your name, until you see us in Dumfries, will be Beatrice Allen and—"

"I must change my name?"

"Certainly, for no doubt the pursuit of those whom your father fears will be very sharp and searching. And now, my dear child, it is but right that you should be told who you are."

"Ah," thought Sir Bertram, "when she learns that she is the daughter of an earl, it may be that she will look scornfully upon the love of a tradesman's son."

But Sir Bertram, although he knew much of the character of the lovely girl, knew not how devotedly she loved him.

"My child," continued the merchant in a grave tone and almost in a whisper, for he was cautious lest anyone might hear except Adelicia and Bertram, "you are the only daughter, only child, in truth, of an earl."

"An earl!" said Adelicia, opening wide her beautiful eyes, and turning very pale. "Is he who claims me as his daughter an earl?"

"He is; but your mother—"

"My mother! Have I a mother, too?" interrupted Adelicia.

"No, your mother has been dead for many a year, my poor child," replied the merchant, as he gazed compassionately upon her pale and surprised face. "I was about to say that your mother was of far nobler birth, as they say, than your father."

This was news to Sir Bertram, who had not been informed of all that had passed between his father and the disguised earl. He listened eagerly to learn more, so intent was he to hear that he advanced a pace into the room, or he would, perhaps, have heard a light and creeping noise behind him. Had he noticed this stealthy noise he would have turned in time to perceive a dark and conspirator-like face peering in, the face of Carow, the surgeon and secretary of Lord Charles Gray.

But Sir Bertram's mind was fixed no longer upon the duties of a sentinel. His soul was in his eyes and ears, and they were wholly given up to the lips of his father at that moment.

The faces of the merchant and Adelicia were not turned towards the door, for each was gazing steadily into the eyes of the other, or they might have seen that dark, pale, treacherous-looking visage and its black flashing eyes, as it appeared for but an instant, darted a keen glance at the features of the maiden,

and then vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, like a bubble bursting in a shadow.

The face was visible only for a second, but it was still near the door, and its cat-like owner was crouching in the darkness of the hall, as eager to hear as Sir Bertram. Crouching like the stealthy beast of prey that he was, and as he should have been to be the friend of Sir Blaize and the satellite of Lord Charles.

"Yes, my child, your mother was of far nobler birth than your father," repeated the merchant, as Adelicia remained speechless with wonder. "Your father is an earl; your mother was the daughter of a prince whose mother, the lawful wife of a duke, was a royal princess of England, who was afterwards England's queen."

"Oh, my father!" was all that Adelicia could say in her amazement.

"The daughter of an earl, the granddaughter of a prince, the great-granddaughter of a queen! She is all of these," gasped Sir Bertram, thoughtfully, while his heart stood still. "Then indeed may I never hope to call Adelicia my wife!"

"Bertram, dear Bertram, I care nothing, nothing for all this! I love you, Bertram, and ever will, let come what may. Oh, what are all these hollow titles to me, Bertram! Can you think that I value them as I value your noble nature?"

"Ah, Adelicia, you are indeed of too noble birth for me to hope. Maidens of your rank can be the prize only of great lords and princes! The great-granddaughter of a queen!"

"Oh, Bertram, they may tear me from Stepmore Retreat, but never can they tear my love for you from my heart; no, not even if they drag the heart from my bosom."

She could say no more, and as her head sank upon the breast of Sir Bertram, he pressed his lips upon hers, and turning towards his father said, in a low deep tone:

"Father, she shall not wed that man to whom her father betrothed her. I will seek him out, and battle with him for Adelicia. She shall not leave Stepmore Retreat. I will confront Sir Otto Dare."

"Peace, my son," said the merchant, calmly. "Violence will but bring you ruin. Ruin to yourself, ruin to me, ruin to Adelicia. Patience, and all may be accomplished. Would you destroy Adelicia by making a great noise and clamour? I told her that she was the great-granddaughter of a queen. She is more. She is the rightful queen of England."

On hearing this Sir Bertram trembled, for then indeed all his hopes to wed Adelicia vanished into utter despair. Terror for the safety, for the very life of Adelicia filled his soul. He knew well the fierce mind of the jealous Elizabeth. Should that despotic woman know of this, and once have Adelicia in her power, either imprisonment for life in a dungeon of the Tower of London, or death upon the scaffold, would be the fate of the gentle girl.

"You perceive now, my son, why Adelicia must at once fly from England," said the merchant.

"Who knows this terrible truth except her father and ourselves?" demanded Sir Bertram.

"Sir Otto Dare."

"Oh, great heaven defend me from that man!"

"We are sure," continued the merchant, gravely, "that Sir Otto robbed the chest of the casket, and that casket, as Adelicia's father has told me, contained the following facts."

The merchant stated the facts, and then added: "Hasten, my dear child, and be of good courage, for I have great hopes that all will end happily."

"But the earl, my father, will never break his oath," said Adelicia. "And even if it should so chance that there should be an end of that dreadful match of which he spoke, he, a proud and haughty noble, will never consent to wed his daughter to—"

"The son of a tradesman, you would say," remarked the merchant, with a smile. "But perhaps I may be able to persuade him that the son of a rich English merchant is as fair a match as the son of the duke to whom he promised your hand. Hasten, we will return in half-an-hour, and then Bertram will conduct you through the avenue to where the horses will be ready, and your escort with them."

"But shall I not see you again before I depart?" anxiously asked Adelicia.

"Oh, yes, I will return hither with Bertram when he comes to lead you out," and kissing her, he left the room, leaning upon the arm of his son, and thinking:

"It is a terrible thing sometimes to be born great. Time was when I did not think so."

Father and son passed out into the hall, from whence the crouching beast of prey, Jerome Carow, had already stolen away, as silently and stealthily as he had stolen there.

"Come, Bertram, let us look for a moment at Sir Blaize—we have to pass his door as we go. Lord

Charles must have become quite impatient by this time," replied his father. "But here we are at the door," he added, as they drew near the apartment in which Sir Blaize had been placed. "We must remain but a moment."

Sir Bertram pushed open the door, it being already ajar, and they entered. Jerome Carew was seated near the head of the bed upon which the wounded man lay, and as he knew Sir Bertram well, having seen him in Ireland, and having also spoken with him when Sir Blaize was brought in, he arose and bowed.

"This is my father, Dr. Carew," said Sir Bertram, in a kindly tone, though he disliked the surgeon, and without being well able to say why, Carew had always treated the young knight respectfully, in truth, Sir Bertram had taken very little note of the man, except to observe that he was very obsequious to Lord Charles, and constantly hovering near that nobleman.

The surgeon-secretary bowed again on being presented to Master Stepmore, who gazed very keenly at him. It was one of the marked peculiarities in the habits of the merchant that upon his first introduction to anyone, male or female, he studied sharply each feature in the face of the stranger, as if to impress it for ever upon his mind.

The merchant's hand was resting upon the arm of his son as he gazed keenly upon the dark, pale face of Jerome Carew, and his grasp grew very rigid and tremulous as he gazed. The glance of the surgeon upon the merchant was apparently careless, and yet Richard Stepmore felt that as those deep-set eyes, black and piercing, swept over his features, Jerome Carew had engraved them upon his mind and memory.

The glance of the surgeon was like that of a fox, or of a wolf, or of some beast of prey, stealthy, cunning, and ferocious—ever ready to detect the approach of an enemy. But the merchant, while he was startled in recognising one whom he had known many years before, was rejoiced to see that Jerome Carew had no suspicion that he had ever stood in the presence of Richard Stepmore until that moment.

It was hardly possible that anyone who had known Richard Stepmore in his youth and young manhood could have recognised him in the thin, feeble old man, who seemed scarcely able to lift one feeble limb after another.

"It is the same Jerome Carew whom I once knew," thought the merchant. "Grown older and grayer, but with the same wicked eyes, and hard, cruel face. It seems most wondrous that Sir Otto Dare and the son of Duke Lewis and Jerome Carew—all three deadly enemies of mine—should be clustering about me and mine again! Villanous poisoner and assassin, why has heaven permitted you to live so long?"

"How is it with Sir Blaize, doctor?"

"Sir Blaize has received a severe fall, sir, that is all. He is old and heavy; yet he is very strong and hardy. He needs no farther medical attendance. He may be able to mount his horse in a day or two, I think."

"Lord Charles desires your immediate attendance," said Sir Bertram. "He asked for you some time ago, but I neglected to tell you. You had better go to him at once, doctor, as he has something of importance to tell you."

Carew proceeded to Lord Charles's apartment, and the merchant and Sir Bertram to the library, where they found the earl, who said:

"I have sketched upon this paper the route to be followed by Lord Charles, and full instructions for his guidance. I do not like his face, though I may be deceived. We are forced to trust Adelia to his care, however. He has never seen her, and therefore his willingness to act as her escort can arise only from his desire to render friendly service to Sir Bertram."

"You have selected the three servants of my house of whom I spoke?" asked the merchant.

"I have, and they are already at the avenue gate with the horses," replied the earl. "The three followers of Lord Charles are stupidly intoxicated and are unable to ride or even to walk. That is all my work, for as I know nothing of the men, and very little of their master either, I concluded it would do no harm to deprive him of their company."

"Certainly, you cannot think that Lord Charles is capable of doing any base act towards Adelia," said Sir Bertram.

"You must not suppose that I do, Sir Bertram, because I take these precautions. I think Master Stepmore has told you who Adelia is, and how dangerous is her position. The three servants he bade me select are tried and faithful fellows, devotedly attached to you and to Adelia. They will accompany Lord Charles under the belief that her very life depends upon her safe and speedy arrival at Dumfries."

"And for certain reasons," said Master Stepmore,

still more gravely, "I desire the immediate departure of this man Carew from my house. Ah, my lord," he added, in a guarded voice, "I have my secrets also, and I fear the very presence of Jerome Carew. Perhaps I am not what I am thought to be; and were Carew to suspect the truth, he would soon put it out of my power to befriend Adelia hereafter."

"Well, be it as you desire, Master Stepmore," replied the earl. "Carew, if a spy of Duke Lewis, will be watching Lord Charles, and not Adelia. Go, Sir Bertram, and Master Stepmore, and bid Adelia adieu, and conduct her to the avenue gate with all the secrecy possible. I will go and conduct Lord Charles to the same spot, after placing in his hands this paper of instructions."

With these words spoken, all left the library, to act in accordance with them.

CHAPTER XVII.

MASTER STEPMORE and Sir Bertram found Adelia fully prepared for immediate departure.

A small portmanteau, filled with such articles of need as she had selected, was at her feet.

She had been weeping bitterly as she made her preparations for flight, and scalding tears were wet upon her fair cheek as the merchant came into her room, leaning upon the arm of his son. She dried her tears, and with only a single sob of speechless sorrow, received Master Stepmore's parting embrace and final blessing.

The merchant, himself greatly moved, thrust a heavy purse of gold into her hand, and saying only, in a broken voice:

"Heaven bless and protect thee, my poor, dear child!" he turned and left the room, leaning heavily and feebly upon his staff and crutch.

"Come, dear Adelia," said Sir Bertram, as he raised the portmanteau, "all is ready, and every moment lost may be fatal."

"One moment, dear Bertram," sighed the unhappy girl, as she paused and glanced around the beloved room in which she had passed so many happy years.

Overcome by her sad emotions, she knelt and prayed for a few short moments—and then rising, said:

"Come, Bertram. That bitterness is over. I am ready to go with you. Bertram, were I a queen, which heaven for ever forbid, I would throw away my crown to be your wife. I am to fly from England, they say, but I shall never love you less—"

"You are the rightful queen of England, they say—"

began Sir Bertram.

But she checked his words instantly, as she laid her soft hand upon his lips, and said:

"That is dangerous to speak. Remember, Bertram, that whatever Fate may have made me, or may make me hereafter, to you I shall ever be—Adelia Louvaine; and you to my heart shall ever be firm—dear Bertram."

The lovers exchanged a silent and passionate embrace. Sir Bertram lifted the maiden into the saddle, and then, unable in the deep darkness to distinguish the form and features of Lord Charles from the others, said, in a guarded tone:

"My lord, I would say a word to you."

"This way, my dear friend," replied the young lord, in a cheerful tone, though he was by no means in a good humour, for as yet he had not seen the face of the original of that picture which had thrust this adventure upon him. "This way, my dear friend."

Sir Bertram groped his way to him, and laying his hand on the lord's knee, said, in a grave and solemn tone:

"My lord, you will do all for the best, I know, but remember that you carry my heart with you."

"Oh, never fear that I shall forget that, my dear friend," replied Lord Charles, gaily. "Farewell, and let us hope that we all may win where we love."

"Remember that we shall meet again, my lord," said a deep and sonorous voice in the darkness, and Sir Bertram knew that it was the voice of the disguised earl.

"All ready! depart!" commanded Sir Bertram, and the party moved away, one of Master Stepmore's three selected servants acting as a guide, Adelia riding between the other two, both of whom had a hand upon her bridle, and Lord Charles with Carew bringing up the rear.

The young lord was much chafed in mind, for as he told Carew when the latter went to him after parting with Master Stepmore, he deemed it a very unlucky affair that circumstances had made it necessary that Mistress Adelia Louvaine, whom he had ridden so far to see, should be obliged to flit away immediately upon his arrival, without his so much as having had a glimpse at her face.

"It might be," growled the young lord, "that the picture was a gross flattery."

"My lord, I have had a glimpse of her, and I say

she is divinely beautiful. There is no dame nor damsel in London so fair. Her hair is jet black, and her complexion brilliantly beautiful. But I will not describe her, as all attempts to do so will fail."

As Lord Charles knew his secretary to be a man of taste, this information encouraged him greatly, and so eager was he to have a view of the much-praised beauty, that when the disguised earl entered the apartment to tell him all was ready for his departure, he would have attempted to bribe the supposed servant to so manage affairs that he should have a fair view of Adelia's face at once.

Carew, however, checked the young lord, by saying:

"We are ready. Of course I am to accompany you, my lord."

"Of course," was the reply; and it was then that the disguised earl made the remark which Lord Charles had repeated to Sir Bertram, and bade the gentlemen follow him immediately, as there was no time to lose.

Thus Lord Charles found himself in the saddle again, near the hour of midnight, with every prospect of a heavy storm, whereas he had been all day indulging in the rosiest anticipations of having before this late hour made a deep and lasting impression upon the heart of the beauty of Stepmore's Retreat.

"You will see her to-morrow," thought Carew. "It will be very strange if I do not make my fortune for life out of what I have discovered to-night. This is a grave state secret, and had I the lost casket and its contents, or the contents only, Queen Elizabeth would pay me richly for them. So would old Duke Lewis, who doubtless knows that the daughter of the outlawed earl is the great-granddaughter of Queen Mary, and who has already, I suspect, built his hopes as high as did old Northumberland on his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey."

The speed at which the party was proceeding made conversation very unpleasant, so that all rode on in silence. But Carew had food for reflection, and he feasted his scheming mind as follows:

"Perhaps fortune has resolved to befriend me at last. I have been a mere hound, licking the feet and hands of men I hate and despise, ever since I can remember. I have worn my life out in pandering to their vices and ambition, especially to Duke Lewis, who makes me a very slave, because my life is in his hands. As for this butterfly lord, I detest him. I might have been rich and great but for his father, and now that I have stumbled upon this state secret I must make the most of it."

"Lord Charles means to play the maiden false, for he will certainly go love-mad on the morrow. Master Stepmore would pay me well, too, were I to talk this heartless lord. But Master Stepmore has only gold to give, nor would he reward me with more than a thousand crowns or so. Besides, I like him not at all, nor do I know why I hate you, Master Stepmore. But hate you I do. My heart tells me that you and Jerome Carew have met before to-night, though when or where I cannot tell."

"Yes, Master Stepmore, were I to save your adopted daughter from Lord Charles, no doubt you would give me right willingly a thousand crowns, or more; and you, Sir Bertram, might add as many more, for 'tis said you are as generous as the sun. But there your gratitude would end, nor would I demand more."

"How is it with you, Lord Charles? You are not generous, nor is there any gratitude in you selfish, greedy nature. If I serve you, it is enough that you give me food, drink, and moderate raiment. I carry your lordship's purse, 'tis true; but the purse is seldom heavy, and your lordship is too shrewd to be plundered easily."

"Now for the maiden. What can she give me if I talk Lord Charles, and so conduct affairs as to make her the happy wife of Sir Bertram? What can she give? Gratitude—a few smiles—a kiss of her fair hand, and her good will with Sir Bertram! A ring, perhaps, or some keepsake, to tell me she appreciates honour and honesty! Bah! For all such I care nothing."

"And now for you, Edwin Hume, for I take you to be the outlawed earl of Hereford. What has your lordship to give? Simply—'Thank you, doctor, and I would I had more than thanks to give.'"

"And how with you, Duke Lewis of Trenthamdale? What may I hope from you if I lead this noble and much desired prize straight into your castle and say—'See, your grace, here it is all accomplished for you. Here in Lord Charles madly in love with the very lady your grace desires him to wed, and here she is, in your power. Reward me, your grace!' What would you say?"

Here Jerome Carew gnashed his teeth with suppressed rage, and thought:

"I know very well what you would say, Duke Lewis. It would be—'You may live a little longer,

Jerome Carew, and here are a hundred crowns for your services!"

"Gracious old man! Some day I may be even with you."

"Yet I may still appear to be serving you, Duke Lewis. So for the present I set you aside as a probable bidder for my hands and head."

"Ah, there is Sir Blaize, who may desire to bid. But Sir Blaize lies in Stepmore Retreat, bruised and crippled. He desires that his daughter may be Duchess of Trenthamdale. I fear I may be forced to spoil his plans, though he promises me largely. But Sir Blaize, when kept you a promise except for your own gain? I must hear Sir Otto Dare. And you, Sir Otto, who have got the start of all of us, and who have the contents of the casket in your bosom, no doubt, ready for use at any moment—what will you give Jerome Carew, if he plays into your hands, and leads the flying damsel into your arms?"

"I know you, too, very well, Sir Otto Dare. You would bid me begone to the evil one, and give me a dagger-thrust to speed my going. So stand aside, and let me speak with this royal bidder—Queen Elizabeth."

"You are growing very old, and you were always ugly, your majesty, but you are as vain and as jealous as ever. What will you give Jerome Carew if he places in your merciful hands one who may be made your rival and successor? What if I place all the proofs of her royal descent and herself in your majesty's eager hands—what then? What will you give the plain surgeon, Jerome Carew?"

"You will give me much, for kings and queens can afford to be very generous with the confiscated property of their subjects."

"Your majesty will confiscate the great wealth of Master Stepmore; he being a traitor and desiring to wed his son to one of the blood-royal. Your majesty would then give all that wealth to your faithful subject, Jerome Carew."

"And, as there is gentle blood in my veins, a simple baronetcy would not content me, your grace. I like the title and the sound of baron better. Your grace would make me a baron and a peer of England. Baron Carew, your grace, and your majesty's favour at court."

"I ask no more. I will be content with that. Ah, your majesty will grant it readily, for a breath and confiscated property costs you nothing. So I accept your bid, Queen Elizabeth, and the flying damsel shall be yours."

Thus the ambitious and avaricious surgeon made up his mind to betray Adelia to one who would assuredly seize upon her as a hungry spider seizes upon a fly, revolving in his cunning and busy mind the steps he should take to gain possession of the casket's contents.

He was sure that Sir Otto had them, and that he had not yet divulged the secret to anyone.

But it was first necessary to prevent the escape of the maiden from England. When that was done he could begin his search for the contents of the lost casket. So, for the present, he plotted.

The servant who acted as guide, knew the road well, and all night they rode on without interruption of any kind.

Adelia had not spoken a word since her parting with Sir Bertram.

Morning dawned, and Carew was the first to discover that among those who rode in advance there were none of the followers of Lord Charles. As this fact became evident, he spurred his horse forward, and asked:

"How is this? Did none of my lord's retinue accompany us?"

"If your honour means those who came with the wounded knight," replied the guide, "I may say, nay, since they feasted and drank so heartily at Stepmore Retreat, that they were almost stupefied when we left."

"As I live," muttered Carew, halting, so that Lord Charles might come up, "I thought these fellows were all our knaves."

Lord Charles on being told of the fact, uttered an oath, for he was weary with his long ride. He spurred on with Carew and demanded of the guide where the first halt was to be made, as he needed refreshment, and no doubt the lady did also.

"A few miles farther on, my lord," replied the guide, "there is an inn; but Master Stepmore's orders were that we should avoid the inn, as being too public a place, and turn aside into Leder's Road, which will lead us to a farmhouse whose owner is discreet and a true friend of our master."

"So you received full instructions as to the route?" asked Lord Charles, suspiciously.

But here Adelia raised her veil, thus revealing her beautiful face, and said:

"You may place all trust in this man, Lord Charles. He is a faithful old servant and greatly attached to me. And so in truth are both of the others. Good

morning, my friends," she continued, addressing the three men kindly.

There was an ease and grace in her manner totally unexpected by him—the refined and fascinating air of a high-bred and polished lady, and her voice was like melting melody in its depth and richness.

Lord Charles wondered where she could have attained these rare accomplishments and from whom, secluded as he believed she had been all her life in the quiet scenes of Stepmore Retreat. But ease, grace and a musical voice had been Adelia's inheritance from nature, and all had been carefully cherished and improved by Richard Stepmore's care, taste, and judgment.

As she addressed Lord Charles so frankly, the blood rushed into his face, the gay speech he had intended to use was lost in his love-bewildered brain, and he stammered out awkwardly:

"Weary—ah, why in the service of so fair a lady—I could say, in behalf of my friend, Sir Bertram—in fact, I am not at all weary."

"It is as I thought 'would be,' muttered Jerome Carew, as his keen, shrewd glance read all that passed.

"The silly fellow, like a moth, has been playing around a flame. His wings are scorched and he is madly in love at first glance."

(To be continued.)

SCIENCE.

PROF. LIEBIG states that 1,460 quarts of the best Bavarian beer contain exactly the nourishment of a two-and-a-half pound loaf of bread. This beer is similar to the famous Allsop's.

A CIVIL ENGINEER on the Pacific Railroad writes that he has seen a remarkable curiosity—a natural hot spring—in Nevada, which he describes as situated in a crater 150 ft. long in one direction and 75 ft. in the other—a mammoth bath tub in shape.

ACARUS SACCHARI, THE SUGAR INSECT.

THE following is a synopsis of Robert Nicoll's research as to the *acarus sacchari*.—Every variety of unrefined sugar contains more or less acar, minute insects, resembling somewhat the sea crab. These are well known in sugar warehouses; and no one who sees them running nimbly along the tables would ever use raw sugar. Many believe it more economical, and sweeter better, and really a teaspoonful does go farther than the white article, but it is because it is heavier, but if an equal weight of the refined was used it would be far better. It not only impairs the flavour of the tea and coffee, but is also injurious to the health. The dry, large-grained, and light-coloured is the most nutritious and economical. In a pound of sugar there are no less than 100,000 of these insects.

Dr. Haasel says that out of seventy-two samples, he observed sixty-nine in a living state. By dissolving a spoonful of raw sugar in a glass of water, these may be seen on the surface as white specks. In refined sugar they do not occur, because they cannot pass through the charcoal filters of the refinery, and because it does not contain any nitrogenous substance, as albumen, for even the most insignificant animal cannot exist if entirely deprived of nitrogen. When the refined article is left too long in iron cisterns, after its solution in water has been effected, a trace of the metal may become dissolved, in which the sugar is impure, this rarely however occurs. Grocers and sugar warehousemen are subject to a kind of "itch," affecting their hands and wrists only, and as they are usually of cleanly habits, the disease can only be accounted for in this way, that the *acarus sacchari*, like its congener, the *acarus scabiei*, has burrowing propensities, bores into their skin, and breeds there. These two resemble each other closely, though the sugar insect is larger and more formidable. Pure sugar is almost as desirable as pure water, and who would, who has any pretension to cleanliness, drink stagnant water if he could as easily obtain it pure, and who would eat raw sugar, teeming with animalcules and vegetable impurities, if the refined article were as easily purchased?

THE SOUTHERN HEAVENS.—In the southern heavens there is a region of the sky in which stars of all magnitudes are strewn more richly than in any other portion of the celestial sphere. This region extends from the feet of the Centaur over the Southern Cross, and along the jewelled hull of the ship Argo, merging into the splendid band of stars belonging to the constellations Canis Major, Orion, and Taurus. Across the southern part of this region the Milky Way shines with a lustre so far exceeding that which it has along its northern semicircle as to suggest the impression of greater proximity. The whole region is so splendid that it strikingly impresses those who are accustomed to the comparative uniformity of our own nocturnal skies. Travellers in the Southern hemisphere fully confirm the extraordinary statement by the late Captain Jacob (a care-

ful astronomer and observer), "that the general blaze from this portion of the sky is such as to render a person immediately aware of its having arisen above the horizon, though he should not be at the time looking at the heavens, by the increase of general illumination of the atmosphere, resembling the effect of the young moon."

THE CLIMATES OF PARIS AND LONDON COMPAKED.

Most people who have visited Paris are under the impression that, for clearness, salubrity, dryness, and heat, the climate of the fairest of European cities is incomparably superior to that of London. The idea has no doubt arisen from the fact that most visitors to the French capital choose either summer or autumn for their trip. At these periods even our own smoky metropolis is at its best; but the hard-working citizen, who for the first time finds himself walking down the Boulevards or the Rue Royale upon a lovely June or August afternoon, sees the Paris climate in its fullest perfection. The air is free from smoke, the buildings and houses are either dazzlingly white or of a delicate cream colour, and even the mud itself is of a clearer and brighter hue than the greasy, metallic-looking paste with which the Londoner is so familiar. Let him, however, choose November or December for his excursion, and he will soon discover that Paris can be as cold and cloudy, and even as foggy, as our own city. A few figures from various unimpeachable sources, both French and English, will, it is hoped, do much to dispel the prevailing notion of the great superiority of the climate of Paris over that of London.

The climate of Paris may be taken as being typical of that of the whole of the north-west of France, its changeableness, however, being somewhat less than that of the districts bordering on the sea. It is less cold in winter than the former, being warmed by the breezes from the Atlantic Ocean, but colder than the south and west. In summer it is more temperate than the south and east, but hotter than the extreme west. The mean temperature of Paris, taken from a series of official and private observations running over thirty-six years, may be taken at 51.55 deg. F. The lowest temperature observed during fifty-two years was 2 deg. below zero F.; the highest during the same time was within a fraction of 99 deg. F.

These figures are worthy of a little consideration. For a similar period the averages of the observations taken in London by the officers of the Royal Society are as follows: Mean temperature, 55.50 deg. F.; highest temperature, 97 deg. F.; the lowest, 5 deg. below zero F. The mean temperature of Paris is therefore a fraction over 1 deg. F. higher than our own, while the highest temperature only exceeds ours by something less than 2 deg. F.

It must, however be borne in mind that in the suburbs of London the mean temperature is 2 deg. F. below that of the city, and that on winter nights, when Jack Frost is striving his hardest to destroy all vegetation within his reach, there is often as much as 4 deg. F. difference between the thermometers of the city and the suburbs.

It will be also instructive to compare the mean temperature of the four seasons in both places with each other.

	Paris.	London.
	Fahr.	Fahr.
Mean Temperature, Spring	59.0	59.0
" Summer	64.8	62.5
" Autumn	52.0	51.0
" Winter	39.5	39.0

The amount of annual rainfall in London only slightly exceeds that of Paris, although any unprejudiced person would feel inclined to give it as his opinion that the number of rainy days in London greatly exceeded those in the former city. The French authorities that have been consulted differ somewhat in their calculations, owing possibly to having collected the rain with dissimilar instruments. The English figures are from Luke Howard, the French from Gasparin and Bouvard.

	Gasparin.	Bouvard.	Howard.
	inches.	inches.	inches.
Rainfall in Spring	5.6	4.0	5.0
" Summer	6.8	6.0	6.5
" Autumn	5.3	6.4	7.5
" Winter	4.6	4.8	6.6
	22.3	21.2	25.0

THE Gulf Stream derives its name from the circumstance of its issuing from the Gulf of Mexico, from whence it flows in a north-easterly direction at a velocity of five miles an hour, and a breadth at its narrowest part of about fifty miles. Thus it proceeds along the American coast, when it gradually widens its current, and decreases its speed, until it reaches the shores of Newfoundland, where it divides into two branches, and sweeps across the Atlantic. Of these branches one washes the coasts of the British Isles, Norway, and Iceland; and to it Ireland owes its robe of perpetual verdure, and England

and Scotland, their moist, warm climate, that of Labrador, which lies in the same latitude, being rigorous and bleak. The same similarity exists between the situation of Norway and Greenland, but the former enjoys the revivifying influence of the Gulf Stream, and is thus spared the dreary snows of the latter. In like manner, Lisbon and Washington should, from their respective positions, share alike as to climate; but the presence of the Gulf Stream at once accounts for the great difference in temperature between the two places. It is owing to this friendly visitor that, while the thermometer on the north-eastern shores may be standing at 32 or 33 deg., that on the north-western will rise to 50 or 51 deg., and similar differences of temperature may be observed between the eastern and western coasts of Scotland.

THE PROPHECY.

BY THE

Author of "Oliver Darvel," "Michel-demer," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Mr. Melrose and Mr. Whitney reached the hall, and had closed the door behind them, the latter said:

"How could you speak so brusquely, Melrose? It would almost have been better for you to have refused this trust, than to have made so bitter an enemy of Ashford as he will be to you from this time forth."

"I am not afraid of him. He has venom enough and to spare, but he will scarcely venture to throw any portion of it on me. I despise him as a mean, pitiful creature, yet there is a presentiment in my mind that he and I will yet come into dire conflict with each other. Should that day ever arrive, let him look to himself, for I shall have no mercy upon him."

"If I had been aware that such a feeling existed, I would not have insisted, as I did this morning, that you should act with me in this business."

"There is a dark thread woven in his life and mine, which will yet bring us together for evil to one, or both. I am not a fatalist, yet I feel sure of that."

"Have you no wish to see the child I spoke of? If you place faith in the old prophecy your mother spoke of last evening, she may be a most important personage to you in the days to come."

"I have no faith in this legend, though my mother often refers to it. I shall see the child at some future day."

The two ladies took a very friendly leave of each other; at Mrs. Whitney's request, the little girls were summoned to bid her good-bye, and Fantasia came in leading Violet by the hand. But as soon as her eyes rested on Mr. Leslie she broke from her companion, and running rapidly forward, clung to him and cried out in her childish voice:

"Oh, uncle! I am so glad—where's Judy? I want Judy!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Leslie, quite aghast. "What does the child mean? I never saw her in my life before."

At the sound of his voice Violet shrank away, and burst into a cry that was pitiful to hear. Ashford quickly said:

"You must be uncommonly like somebody she's been used to see. Stop crying, Violet, and tell me for whom you took this gentleman."

At his bidding she hushed her sobs, and he raised her tear-stained face almost to a level with that of the clergyman. When she looked at him clearly again, she smiled dubiously, and held out her arms, saying:

"Uncle Lou, take Violet, and give her candy."

"My dear child, I am not your uncle—I wish I was, for I have nothing so sweet as you to love me."

The child was pacified, leave was taken, and they drove from the door as the last gleam of sunshine faded from the snow-clad valley.

Ashford said:

"I shall take a note of two things which may be of some use to me in finding out something about that child. One is, that her uncle's name is Louis—and the other, that there must be a wonderful likeness between him and Mr. Leslie. I don't forget faces easily, and when I find the parson's counterpart with the name of Louis, I shall know what steps to take."

"Oh, Hiram, don't speak so harshly."

The two children agreed very well, for Fanny was glad to have a companion to play with, and patronise as an elder sister often does, and Violet was so docile, and sweet tempered that few causes of contention arose between them.

Though the house was lonely enough, Mrs. Ashford did not regret the frequent absences of her husband, but occupied herself with the cares of her house, in which she was assisted by Jonah, an old gray-haired servant, who had passed his life on

the place, and had no higher ambition than to die on the soil on which he was born. At this inclement season, Jonah furnished the house with fire-wood, and did what he could in the kitchen; but when spring opened, he attended to the garden and the few acres of land Ashford thought it expedient to cultivate. The remainder of the farm was pasture land, on which sheep alone were raised, attended by an intelligent dog celebrated by the Ettrick shepherd. Every evening Celt brought home his charge, and after seeing them safely housed, came back with Jonah to the small room which they shared together. The friendship between the old man and the dog was firmly established, and Jonah declared that his canine pet had more sense than half the people he had known in his long life.

In the evening, Celt would often find his way into the family room, and join in the frolics of the children, good naturedly permitting himself to be made a beast of burden if such were the whim of his playfellows. But when the voice or step of the master of the house was heard, the dog invariably retreated and took refuge in Jonah's sanctum.

One evening late in March, a lively frolic was going on between the three playmates—the dog with a fantastic-looking cap upon his head trimmed with knots of old ribbon, and a wollen scarf of bright colours tied around his neck, was standing in grave dignity in front of the blazing fire. Fantasia, with an old scarlet crape shawl draped around her, and a wool cap of the same colour upon her head, personated the little Red Riding Hood, and Violet, after much practice, had learned to speak in a gruff voice from the back of the disguised wolf against which her bright golden head was resting.

It was not the first time this scene had been enacted, and the intelligent animal fully understood the part he was expected to perform. At the close of the dialogue when Violet said:

"Then I will eat you, my dear," Celt sprang upon the little red figure, clasped her in his strong paws, and both rolled together upon the floor, while Violet danced and clapped her hands with glee.

The children had been too much absorbed in their noisy play to see that the door had been opened, and that Ashford was standing a silent spectator of the scene. Celt was the first to detect him; he instantly released Fantasia, and wagging his tail uneasily, moved in the direction of the kitchen.

He abruptly asked:

"Who taught you to act that scene? Does your mother waste her time when I am away, in training you for an actress?"

"Mother's getting supper—she don't know what we've been doing. I made the play out of the story I read, for I can read now. Celt is a nice wolf, and Violet can do well enough now, but I had more trouble to make her do her part right than I had with the good old dog."

Ashford regarded her with a more approving expression than his face often wore when she was near him, and he said:

"I do believe that, after all, you will be worth something to me. I wonder if you can sing: your voice is wonderfully flexible for so young a child, and you ought to be able to sing as well as to act."

"Oh, yes, I can sing."

Fantasia was always ready for display—all she wanted was an audience, for nature had made her eager of applause, and she had little of the bashfulness of childhood. With perfect self-possession she raised her small voice and sang, "Mary had a little lamb," with all the effect she could throw into it.

Her father listened with surprise to the clear, childish treble, and little as he understood, or cared about music, he knew that, with cultivation, the matured voice would be well worth listening to. Fantasia was encouraged to go on, and she sang the duet of "Fanny Gray," changing her voice, and giving dramatic effect to each part.

"By Jove!" he muttered, "I have had a pearl of price entrusted to me, and I have been idiot enough never to see its worth before. That child will make the greatest actress this country has yet produced."

At that moment the storm which had been gathering, burst forth in a loud roll of thunder, and a vivid flash of lightning played on the glass of the narrow windows. Fantasia was always singularly affected by the electric atmosphere: it excited her to a pitch that made her reckless, and the strife of the elements did not seem to alarm her. In summer she frequently danced on the lawn when vivid sheet lightning played through the evening clouds, and she had often said:

"That is my light—it was made for me."

I believe she was right in one sense, for her nature claimed a close affinity with the subtle fluid which pervades all space.

Mrs. Ashford came in to set the table, and with a faint smile, she said:

"I am very glad you got home before the storm."

I was afraid you would be overtaken by it before you reached the Vale."

"You feared on my account? I am really much obliged to you, Mrs. Ashford; but such deceit as that does not go down with me," he scornfully replied. "If the lightning had struck me dead you would not have lamented, for then you would have had the spending of more than your old friend left you."

"I do not think I have been extravagant," said Mrs. Ashford, trying to speak in a calm tone. "Before I married you, I always dressed handsomely and becomingly. You often admired my toilette, and faded as I am, I should like to try the effect of a respectable dress upon myself. I think I have the right to spend a small portion of my income in replenishing my wardrobe."

"Your income! ha! ha! How independent we are, to be sure, since this legacy came in! In the days when I flattered you by admiring what you wore you had pink cheeks, silky hair, and were rather a pretty looking wax doll of a woman; but now you are wrinkled, with a complexion that may be waxy still, but it's yellow wax, by Jove!"

Fantasia started up, and with blazing eyes bounded to the floor, and stood in front of him.

"You shan't talk to my mother so; she's good and pretty, too. I shan't sing and dance for you again."

Ashford, with a forced laugh, said:

"What has become of Violet, she was here when I came in?"

"She ran away with Celt when she saw you. She's afraid of you, but I ain't."

"I'm glad you have so much nerve, for it will be the making of you in the time to come."

His wife paused in her occupation, and looked apprehensively at him. What could he mean with reference to his daughter's future, she asked herself? Why should he speak of that to which he had hitherto seemed supremely indifferent? Some new idea was working in his brain with reference to the child, but what was it?

Mrs. Ashford was firmly impressed with the belief that a time would come when her husband would break away from all the restraints that bound him, and seek the happiness in the outside world which he evidently did not care to find in his own home.

This conviction had been steadily fastening on her that at no very distant day she would find herself deserted, but as long as her daughter was left to her, she believed she could bear with equanimity the absence of the man who seemed to revel in the insults he habitually heaped upon her.

He would probably leave her homeless, and nearly destitute, but she could labour for a support for herself and child, in the same calling which had once been remunerative, and she preferred teaching children to the household drudgery which had so long been her portion. But if her evil husband should spirit Fantasia away. Her heart sunk like lead in her bosom, and the little colour in her face faded out, as the possibility dawned on her mind that he might take from her that which was more precious than gold or lands.

That remorseless man was capable of anything, and she was helpless to defend herself, or to retain her child if he saw fit to remove her with himself when the hour for his own flight came. Yet, surely he would not encumber himself with a wilful child like Fantasia. She would be a trouble and expense to him, of which he would gladly rid himself. With this thought she tried to comfort herself, and allay her fears.

"Mother, what did father mean when he said you had made me an actress? What is an actress?"

A shudder thrilled through the listener's frame. This then was the key to what Ashford had said. She had been very strictly educated, and had that unreasonable prejudice against theatrical people which is often found; so, gentle and kind in her judgment as Mrs. Ashford ordinarily was, she replied, with asperity:

"An actress is a woman who plays a false part on the boards of a theatre, till all truth and nature are forgotten as dreams of the past."

"What is the theatre?" was the next question.

"It is a house to which worldly people go to be amused. There is music, dancing, and fine scenery, but the last is not half as beautiful as our fields in summer time, and the singing of the birds is sweeter to you and me than all the fine music of the orchestra. It is fresh and pure, as I wish my precious darling to be."

"But I'd like to see all those things, and I'd love to dance on the stage, too."

"That is what you shall never do with my consent. I had rather see you dead, much as I love you, than have you exhibit yourself for the amusement of other people. Go to sleep now, and forget all this nonsense."

"I ain't sleepy—I could fly up to the top wall, I

believe, and my feet won't keep still. I wish you hadn't put me to bed until I had danced again."

"You are always excitable when there is a storm, Fanny, and I am afraid your spirit claims kindred with the lightning. The thunder is rolling away at last, and you will be able to sleep presently, if you will try to be quiet."

"But if I can't be quiet what's the use of trying? Let me look out of the window, please; I want to see the clouds pass away, and the stars peeping at me."

"No, dear; you would take cold—lie where you are, and I will soothe you to rest."

Mrs. Ashford sat down beside the nervous creature, and caressed her head and face till the eyelids drooped over the large dark eyes, and the red lips settled into a peaceful smile. She had often soothed Fantasia to repose in the same way before, and while doing so had prayed over her; but never had her supplication for heavenly guidance for her child been so passionately earnest as they were on that night.

The voice of her husband spoke from the half-opened door in a more civil tone than he often used.

"Cherub, come and look at your dress. It is a must buy fine things, it is better to have them of the best quality."

Mrs. Ashford coldly replied:

"I do not wish you to flatter me by such words as those, Hiram. I can't place faith in them after what you said to me this evening."

"Don't be foolish, Laura, but accept the olive branch when it is held out to you. I begin to see dimly that a Christian should try to control his temper. I am going to try and do better, for I should be sorry to think that my wife has cause to deem me a hypocritical pretender, in a matter of such vital importance. I have been talking with Mr. Leslie, and he has made me feel how necessary it is that profession and practice should agree."

Mrs. Ashford earnestly regarded him while he thus spoke, and, with a faint sigh, said:

"I hope you are quite in earnest, but when you first came home this evening, you must have forgotten Mr. Leslie's teachings. You said some very hard things to me, Hiram."

"By Jove! I believe a woman will forgive anything sooner than a wound to her vanity!"

"I am willing to do what I can, and if you will only treat me more kindly before my child, I shall be contented. Of late, you have scarcely seemed to notice or care for her."

"Because I have been blind not to see what a gem she is. Why, that child will develop into something wonderful; she has an artistic temperament, with powers that, when they are cultivated properly, will make her an infant phenomenon."

His wife sunk on a chair in great agitation, and tremulously asked:

"What kind of talent have you discovered in her? Fantasia is too young to be trained to anything except goodness and truth, and her abilities, such as they may be, are of a very childish and wilful order."

"As to the wilfulness that can be ground out of her, if compulsion be necessary; but I shall know how to make my plans effective through her own vanity, and love of display. I saw the little scene she acted with Violet and the dog, and in its way, it was perfect. She will become a great actress if she has the advantage of good training, and the women who distinguish themselves in that line make enormous fortunes."

Mrs. Ashford found courage to say:

"You overrate her talent, and I would sooner lay her in her coffin than see her adopt the life you are planning for her. She would be lost, body and soul, and you, her father, professing to be a religious man, dare not offer her up as a victim to your desire for gain. I think better of you than that, Mr. Ashford."

"Do you?" he sneered; "then you had better lower the standard by which you judge me. As to her moral training, since you are so anxious about that, you could always be near her, to restrain her exuberant spirits."

Mrs. Ashford drearily shook her head.

"No—she would soon escape from me—refuse to be guided by me in the atmosphere of flattery and excitement in which she would live. I cannot consent to your wishes; my daughter is a sacred trust confided to me, and I must do my duty by her as I understand it."

"The child is also mine, and I have the right to control her destiny. It shall be a brilliant one, if I can make it so; but fortune may smile on me more brightly than she has hitherto done, and wealth may come to us before it is necessary to think of what Fantasia may or may not be. I am merely speculating on the chances of the future, Laura; and if I am successful in other matters, in a few years I shall leave the Vale, and seek a wider sphere, and in the meantime our daughter must be educated for the new life that will then open to her. I have been a suc-

cessful teacher, and I shall do what I can for her. She has a sweet voice, and I will get your old piano put in order and you shall give her lessons."

"I shall be glad to have it done," she said; "but I am afraid I have lost all brilliancy of touch, and my hands will no longer match the ivory of the keys, as you used once to assure me they did."

"Did I? well, that was a lover's nonsense, you know. I daresay the keys have grown yellow enough too in all these years, and the contrast will not be so very great after all. Now that you have means of your own, why should you not get a servant to help you?"

"I did not know that you would allow a strange servant about the house, or I should have spoken of it before."

"I am going to turn over a new leaf, as my mother used to say, and I hope the page will have nothing upon it that I shall be ashamed to have others read. I have called myself a Christian; but I have acted more like a heathen than anything else."

Ashford intended to be kinder to her, for he wished to win over Fantasia, and he knew that so long as her mother was treated with contumely, the child would shrink from him.

He fully intended to test his daughter's capacity in every way, and had sufficient cultivation, in spite of his coarse nature, to fit him to judge of the probabilities of success in the arduous career he believed she would eagerly undertake when the proper time arrived.

CHAPTER IX.

THE storm that raged on the previous night had passed away, leaving the atmosphere of crystalline clearness. The sun shone brightly into the windows of the pleasant sitting-room at Lilliput.

Mr. Whitney, looking as brisk as usual, was examining the *Times*, while his wife sat in her usual corner, busily plying her needle.

"It is very strange that I do not hear from Mrs. Brent. She promised faithfully to write to me, and let me know what steps were taken by the guardian of that child to get possession of her again, yet weeks have gone by, and I have not had a line."

"She may have been ill after the exposure to cold and rain when she came to us," suggested Mrs. Whitney. "The advertisement is still in the newspaper, I suppose?"

"Yes, it is still there, and the reference to Mr. Boyle puzzles me more than anything else. Why should he, who was the abettor of the child's abduction, be the person to whom information is to be given of her place of concealment? I hope there is no treachery on the part of that reverend gentleman."

"If there had been, we should have heard from the child's uncle before this time. I think her aunt must have managed so cleverly as to inspire her husband with confidence in him as a suitable agent to recover his ward."

"I hope you are right, Carrie; but my experience of men has taught me to mistrust the most of them."

Mrs. Whitney could make no consoling reply to this, so she took up the newspaper, and running her eyes over the columns, came at last to the advertisement she had read many times before. It ran thus:

"A thousand pounds reward is offered for the recovery of a child, two years of age, who was taken from her friends on the fourteenth of January. A middle-aged woman of respectable appearance was the agent of this abduction, and any information concerning her will also be liberally paid for. The child was fair, with blue eyes, and golden hair, inclined to curl. She is small for her age, and she answers to the name of Violet. Any information concerning the whereabouts of such a child, if addressed to the Rev. Jerome Boyle, No. 83, — street, London, will be promptly attended to."

"Did not Mrs. Brent say that her mistress lived in some small town? Yet this advertisement is expressed in such a manner as to lead to the belief that London was the place from which Violet was removed."

"Just fancy what use such a man as Ashford would make of what I was told concerning her."

"It surprises me after what his wife said about that letter, that he has not made an effort before this to discover something from you."

"Oh, he's deep, and sharp, too, and he has been getting ready for me. But he'll find out nothing that I am not willing to tell him."

"But he may have seen this and replied to it," she said, pointing to the advertisement. "For a thousand pounds he would sell his own child."

"I am afraid so."

After a slight pause, Mrs. Whitney said:

"Violet will not be interfered with, I am certain. I have intuitive faith in Mr. Boyle, and you will find out that I am right."

"I hope so. Ah, there is a ring at the door."

She gathered up her work and passed through a side door, as the one opening from the hall was unclosed to admit Mr. Ashford.

"Ah, so it's you, Ashford," said Mr. Whitney, with as much graciousness as he could command. "Come to the fire—the air must be rather sharp outside, though the day is so beautifully clear."

"I rather enjoyed the ride. I wished to see you particularly."

"Very well—I am at your service."

Ashford drew near the fire, held his benumbed hands over the blaze, and seemed for the moment only to think of making himself comfortable. Whitney watched him curiously, and a little impatiently, but he did not suffer his anxiety to appear.

Ashford carelessly said:

"I suggested to Laura that it will be well for her to hire a good servant to do the work of the house, and I hope you know of one you can recommend."

The lawyer marvelled if this was what brought Ashford to his house that morning, but he briskly replied:

"I am the very one you should have applied to, for I know exactly the person you want. Old Roberts is dead. His housekeeper is a respectable middle-aged woman, and she is anxious to obtain a respectable home with fair wages: she will be a treasure to Mrs. Ashford, for she understands her business, and is faithful in its performance."

"Of course the woman knows how to cook well; that is the main thing, so I will engage her on your recommendation, and she can come to the Vale as soon as she chooses. Of course, as Mrs. Ashford's banker, you will settle as to the terms, and pay her when the money is due."

"Certainly, if such be Mrs. Ashford's wish, and I understand you to say it is."

"Of course it is. I cannot afford to pay the wages. Fanny needs more attention than has hitherto been bestowed upon her, and her mother would have too much to do if she had not someone to assist her."

Whitney was quite mystified by this sudden interest in the wife and daughter Ashford had hitherto treated as if they were of the smallest possible consequence to him.

The lawyer wished to lead the conversation towards Violet, and he said:

"I will arrange all that is necessary with Lethe, and I am glad that Mrs. Ashford will have so good a servant; for the additional charge of a young child like Violet must, under the old condition of things, have become a burden to her. By the way, have you discovered anything?"

"I have discovered much more than you would care for me to know, I fancy," replied Ashford, looking him searchingly in the face.

The lawyer bore the scrutiny with perfect coolness.

"Why am I particularly interested in your researches, my dear sir? The child is an object of compassion to me on account of her peculiar position; but beyond that, I have nothing to do with her affairs."

"Ah, indeed! if that is the case, why then did you mix yourself up with them when the woman who brought her to this neighbourhood came to you for assistance? You see that I have taken pains to ferret out all that can be known here, and I came today prepared to demand such information as to the antecedents of Violet as you may know."

"Mr. Ashford, I am the last man to apply to for such a purpose. I shall be glad if you will explain yourself."

"It is useless for you to pretend ignorance of the facts I have gathered with infinite pains; for I am determined to find out why, and by whom, this child was thrown on the compassion of strangers, as she was on mine."

"Not altogether on your compassion, I think, Mr. Ashford," said the other, significantly. "I understood from your wife that a considerable sum of money was found in the basket with her, and a regular stipend was promised, if you retained her."

"I daresay you knew all about that before Mrs. Ashford told you; for the letter in which the money was enclosed was written by yourself. You were not very complimentary to me, but I do not care for that. If I am to be the guardian of Violet, I have the right to know all that can be told about her."

"I have nothing to tell you. I know no more of her name than you do, nor have I the least clue to her friends. As to the letter, you are welcome to your own opinion concerning it, but you would find it rather difficult to prove me to be the author of it, I fancy."

"I do not care to prove it to the satisfaction of anyone but myself; and I have no doubt that you wrote it. I have ascertained that a woman and child travelled in the stage-coach to the toll-house, a mile hence, in the month of January. They arrived there about dusk, bringing with them a large travelling

trunk, which was very lightly packed. On one end of the trunk were two letters nearly effaced, but the woman at the gate remembered that they were J. B."

"You seem to have commenced your investigations like a regular detective," said the lawyer, with a faint sneer he found impossible to repress.

"The woman after some difficulty, obtained a carriage to take her to Mr. John's house in the valley. A boy was sent with her to bring the vehicle back, as she said she was a cousin of Mr. John's house-keeper, and meant to pass a night with her.

He paused again, and Whitney only said:

"Umph! nothing uncommon in that."

"Perhaps not, but that is not the gist of my story. The stranger did not remain there more than an hour. After a private interview with Mr. John, his carriage was made ready, and he placed the woman and child in it, together with a large wicker basket she had brought in the trunk. He drove off with the child, and never returned. The carriage was brought back on the following morning by your servant Tom."

"You have taken infinite pains, I must say; but what have I to do with Mr. Hodge John or his protégés?"

"On the following night, you took the same woman, without the child, to the toll-house from which she had gone the previous evening. She made efforts to conceal her face, but Mrs. Gandy knew her again by her voice and dress. You waited till the stage came along, and then placed her in it; talking earnestly with her to the last moment, but in so guarded a tone that nothing could be learned of the subject of your conversation. I think I have made out a clear case of circumstantial evidence, and now I ask why am I to be kept in ignorance of the real position of the child I am to rear as my own?"

Mr. Whitney asked:

"Have you applied to Mr. John for information?"

Ashford blushed slightly, and his brows knit together with a heavy frown.

"I have not been fairly treated either by you or Mr. John. I should at least know as much of her antecedents as you or he can tell me."

"You would gain nothing by doing so, Mr. Ashford, and might lose a great deal. I can tell you nothing more than you have found out for yourself, for the simple reason that I am as much in the dark as to the name and former residence of Violet as you yourself are. The woman who brought her here refused to reveal either."

"Did she not tell you why it was necessary to conceal the child?"

"She admitted that Violet was removed from her friends to save her from the power of an unscrupulous guardian."

"I am compelled to accept your assurances; but what would you say if I told you that I had already communicated with the person referred to in the advertisement?"

The lawyer coldly replied:

"I thought it probable that you would seek such information. But if Mr. Boyle enlightened you as to who and what Violet is, why did you apply to me?"

"Because I believe he is more interested in keeping the place of her retreat concealed, than he is in accomplishing the wishes of the man who published that advertisement."

"Will you permit me to read Mr. Boyle's letter? I shall be better able to judge his true meaning after doing so."

Ashford drew forth a yellow envelope with the post-mark of London, and after some hesitation, he gave it into the lawyer's hands.

Whitney opened the letter, on which, in clear calligraphy, the following lines were traced:

"London, March 5th, 18—

"MR. ASHFORD.—Sir,—I received your communication in reply to the advertisement referred to, offering a thousand pounds reward for any information concerning a child who mysteriously disappeared last January.

"You will be sorry to hear that you were not the first person to reveal her place of retreat. The woman who took her to the Vale has been traced, and a full confession forced from her; so you see the sum offered cannot be claimed by you. But I am authorized to say to you that the thousand pounds shall be paid to you at once, if you will pledge yourself to cease all inquiries respecting little Violet, and keep her well and safe till the time comes for reclaiming her by her friends. Should that day never arrive, she will not be left a burden on your hands; for, in any case, she will be properly provided for.

"Why the child was secretly removed is no concern of yours, and you will gain no information, inquire as you may. Such precautions have been taken as must baffle all attempts on your part to understand why Violet is separated from her kindred, and placed among strangers.

"As you cannot be expected to perform this ser-

vice for utter strangers without adequate remuneration, I am authorized to inform you that an annuity of five hundred pounds per annum will be paid to you, in addition to the sum already promised, and the day may come in which your young charge can richly repay you for the fatherly care it is so evidently to your interest to bestow upon her. You will oblige me by writing immediately, and letting me know your ultimatum. Respectfully,

"JEROME BOYLE."

With an intense feeling of relief, Mr. Whitney returned the letter. By what means Mrs. Brent had checkmated the husband of her mistress he could not divine, but it was very evident that it had been done. That her guardian was not aware of Violet's retreat he felt assured, and for the present she was safe.

"This promises to be a very good thing for you, Ashford, and I advise you to accept the trust on the terms proposed." A thousand pounds are not picked up every day."

"That may be true enough, but if the child be a great heiress, as I begin to suspect, the sum offered is shabby to the last degree."

"If—yes, that is an important little word, which I verily believe has more significance than any other in the language. Take what is offered, my dear sir, and perform your duties towards Violet in a fatherly manner."

"I have already written," replied Ashford, indifferently. "This letter came three days ago, and I did not take long to decide on my course. I accepted the offer; but that does not bind me to use no efforts to find out the whole story connected with that child."

"Pardon me, Mr. Ashford, but I cannot agree with you. In taking this money you tacitly bind yourself to respect the conditions on which it is given. I certainly think you are in honour bound to respect the secrecy that seems so vitally necessary to insure the safety of your little ward."

"I shall not compromise the last, so make yourself easy on that score. I have probably made my last attempt for a long time to fathom this singular affair. I am glad the child was sent to my house; for, one way or another, she will be worth a great deal to me yet. But I must be going, for I have an engagement."

"For the present, this affair is settled, then. I will see about the servant, and send her to Mrs. Ashford."

"My wife is much indebted to you for your good opinion of her," said Ashford, with a slight sneer. "Good-morning."

"What a graceless scamp!" muttered Whitney. "If Ashford could only find out the name of that poor infant's guardian, he would act the part of a Judas without scruple. Money is the only god he worships, though he is always trying to impress others with the belief that he is a follower of Him who said, 'Heap not up riches, for they will take wings to themselves and fly away.'"

Mrs. Whitney here came in, and eagerly asked:

"Did Mr. Ashford come to say that he had seen that advertisement?"

"Yes, and your intuitions were correct concerning Mr. Boyle, as they usually are in most things. I have read his letter to Ashford, and he seems anxious to keep the whereabouts of the child from being known as we can be."

"Thank heaven for that!"

The lawyer described the interview which had just taken place. His wife listened with fixed attention, and after reflecting a few moments, said:

"Two women have proved more than a match for one man, wicked as he must be; but I should like to know how the thing was managed. Mrs. Brent will write to you and explain, I suppose; whenever she is permitted to do so."

"I hope the post to-morrow will bring me something from her."

This hope was not disappointed, for a letter came on the following day; but nothing could have been more unsatisfactory than its contents. Mrs. Brent only wrote:

"I am quite safe, and in good spirits, for my young lady has managed so cleverly in my absence, that our secret is safe. The husband is satisfied that the child is no longer in his way, and she has apparently reconciled herself to the loss of her niece. I dare not explain."

"I am on the eve of embarking with my mistress, and we may be absent several years. If you will send a few lines occasionally to the address of Mr. B—, he will let us know how our little darling is getting on with her new friends."

"With grateful thanks to yourself and Mrs. W., I am, yours truly,

JUDITH B—."

(To be continued.)

THE IMPROVEMENTS OF PARIS.—A statue in relief of the Emperor Napoleon on the façade of the newly-

erected portion of the Tuilleries, fronting the quay, between the Pavillons de Leclapart and La Tremoille, has just been exposed to view by the removal of the scaffolding. An inscription underneath runs thus:—"Napoleon III., Emperor, rebuilt from 1861 to 1868, in the Palace of the Tuilleries, the wing raised from 1867 to 1869 by Henry IV., Louis XIII., and Louis XIV."

FACETIE.

THE oldest lady of title—Old Lady Day.

WHAT are the most unsocial things in the world? Mistresses. You never see two of them together.

A HUSBAND, on being told, the other evening, that his wife had lost her temper, replied that he was glad of it, for it was a very bad one.

"SEE here, mister," said an Irish lad of seven summers, who was driven up a tree by a dog, "if you don't take that dog away, I'll eat up all your apples."

MURPHY was asked why it was so difficult to wake him in the morning. "Indeed, master, it's because of taking your own advice, always to attend to what I'm about; so, whenever I sleep, I pays attention to it."

AN ELECTION TRICK.

Elections are very demoralising. During a hotly-contested election at Shrewsbury, in the reign of George the First, an old, half-pay officer, who was a non-resident burgess, was brought down from London at the expense of Mr. Kynaston, one of the candidates, and hospitably entertained for a week by that gentleman's political supporters. On the following day he recorded his vote for the opposition candidate. When asked why he had accepted the hospitalities of the one side and voted for the other, he jauntily replied that, following the advice of his old general, the Duke of Marlborough, he had "quartered himself on the enemy."

"YOUR young friend Wigby should be a good lawyer," said Smith to Robinson; "at least, he has a large collection of law books, nobly bound." "Sir," said Robinson, "you appear to think that law is binding."

Smith has offered a reward for the meaning. THE need of brevity and point in addresses to children is well illustrated by a story of a clergyman who wore a little girl by a long sermon, and as he was gathering himself up for a new assault, she cried out: "Oh, mother, he isn't going to stop at all; he's swelling up again!"

A RENOUNCING DICTIONARY.

MR. P.: "What is the meaning, my dear, of the word 'dictionary' being stuck against the wall within our area gate? I have observed it these two mornings."

MRS. P.: "Really, I can't tell. It must be some scheme of that infatuated cook. I have no doubt it conveys some private signal to the police constable who is so often lurking in the area—her Richard, as she calls him. But I'll ring the bell and insist upon knowing. (Rings the bell and causes cook to appear.) Now, cook, I thought I told you that if you didn't warn the policeman off the premises I should warn you off?"

COOK: "Yes, ma'am."

MRS. P.: "Well, then, what is the meaning of the private signal your master has seen against the area wall?"

COOK: "Private signal, ma'am?"

MRS. P.: "Yes, private signal; you know very well what I mean—the piece of paper with the word 'dictionary' upon it!"

COOK: "La, ma'am, why, that be just what you told me to do. Poor Richard can't read writing, and I've been made promise not to speak to him; so the only way I could warn him off, as you ordered, was by a printed notice. He can read printed letters, you see, ma'am, and our Samvel said as how all I'd got to do was, to cut Dick-shun-airy out of a book, and stick it up where he'd see it."

AN Irish attorney, not proverbial for his probity, was robbed one night in going from Wicklow to Dublin. His father, next day, meeting Baron O'Grady, said: "My lord, have you heard of my son's robbery?" "No," replied the baron; "whom did he rob?"

A GENTLEMAN went to a masked ball quite unexpectedly, arrayed in a gorgeous costume. An acquaintance addressed him: "Glad to see you here; but did not know you were to come, sir." "Tecumseh be blowed," ejaculated the distinguished man. "I'm the Duke of Buckingham."

"THAT FELLOW," AND "THAT GIRL."—A clergyman recently married a couple, and the pair had scarcely left the church when a rich banker rushed

in, and, having heard the facts, expressed his disgust that his daughter should have married "that fellow." The banker had but just left, when in rushed a wealthy broker, who, on hearing the facts, expressed his disgust at his son's marrying "that girl." An even thing all round.

"WHO MADE DE PALINGS?"

The Rev. Newman Hall told the following story in the course of a lecture in Sheffield, on his recent visit to America. An illiterate negro preacher said to his congregation:

"My bredren, when de fust man Adam was made, he was made of wet clay, and set up agin de palings to dry."

"Do you say," said one of the congregation, "dat Adam was made ob wet clay, and set up agin de palings to dry?"

"Yes, sar, I do."

"Who made de palings?"

"Sit down, sar," said the preacher, sternly, "such questions as that would upset my system of theology."

A "SPIRITED" REPLY.—A poor fellow, on being rescued from drowning, was asked to take some spirits and water. "No, I thank you," replied he, "I have had water enough already; I'll take the spirits alone."

"PERSEVERE, persevere," said an old lady to her maid. "It's the only way you can accomplish great things." One day eight apple dumplings were sent downstairs, and they all disappeared. "Sally, were those dumplings?" "I managed to get through with them, ma'am," replied Sally. "Why, how on earth did you manage to get through so many dumplings?" "I persevered, ma'am."

CONJUGAL CRITICISM.

Precocious Youth: "Mamma, has your tongue got legs?"

Mamma: "No, my dear—why do you ask?"

Precocious Youth: "Because papa says it's always running."

MR. GEORGE TRAIN CANDID.—Mr. George Francis Train having been asked by the American Working Women's Association to deliver a lecture, replied: "My opinions are too pointed, my ideas too strongly defined, my Radicalism too practical, I am afraid, to do any good; I tread on too many corns; I raise too much antagonism; my audiences are too mixed; caste is too severely marked. No theorist, my acts create hisses; hence even your association will be at loggerheads, I fear, with my views."

THE LATEST FROM AMERICA.—The Alabama claims are half caste.—*The Owl.*

"THE NATURAL LIMITS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION."—As far as you can go.—*The Owl.*

ADVICE TO THOSE ABOUT TO GO TO LAW.—First ask yourself this question: "Are you morally in the right?" If the answer is "No," go to law by all means, you'll be certain to win.—*Tomahawk.*

THE Lord Chief Justice is likely to have a cheerful time of it, if the example set in the case of Saurin v. Starr is followed by many people. We may expect to see Mrs. Fitzmaurice Jones bringing an action against Lady Adela Flash for excluding her from the celebrated Tuesday evenings in Perceval Square. Or, what is more of a parallel in the aspect of the case, Mr. Bill Lockit will bring an action against Her Majesty's Government for refusing to accommodate Mr. Lockit any more in Millbank.—*Tomahawk.*

MAKING UP FOR IT.

Lady: "But if you hunt five days a-week, you can't have time for anything else."

Fuzhunter: "Oh, yes, I do lots of thing; and then I am churchwarden on Sunday, don't you know?"—*Punch.*

A PLEASING CONVICTION.—There are certain theatres in London to which we go, feeling sure that if not delighted ourselves, we are certain to see others transported, such is the character of the pieces produced.—*Punch.*

CUTTING IT FINE.

The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office has issued a Circular to the public Offices, urging greater economy in the consumption of quill pens, which, judging from Mr. Grog's cutting remarks, appear to be very wastefully used between ten and four. As this is a question of pounds, shillings, and pence, the nation having to stump up a large sum every year for the supply of these quills, the Controller is no doubt right in making a pounce upon what seems a decided abuse. But, perhaps, a still more necessary reform would be effected, if the consumption of another article in constant use in Government offices could be lessened.—*Red Tape.*—*Punch.*

GOODY FOUR SHOES.—By the more humane farriery which "The British Goodenough Horseshoe

Company" wish to introduce, it appears that the horse is likely to be the gainer. On this account alone, therefore, the object of the company is good enough for us to wish it success.—*Punch.*

CARRIED WITHOUT A DIVISION.—A dinner was lately given at one of the great hotels, to bring the Australian preserved meat into notice. If, by the introduction into England of these provisions, which seem to be moderate in price, some of those amongst us, who now seldom, if ever, taste animal food, can get a good nourishing meal, everyone must wish success to such a meritorious case of dish-establishment.—*Punch.*

NICE POLICE NEWS FROM WIGAN.

The other day at Wigan a publican and collier were tried for brutally assaulting a policeman who had called at the house of the former after midnight. He knocked him down, kicked him, and, says the local report, "tried to hold him over a fire—a performance in which they succeeded for a short time." The publican was fined ten pounds: the accomplice half. Policemen are evidently not very highly valued at Wigan. There is a touch of professional originality in the collier's putting the policeman on the coals. Possibly they had been bitten by the pantomimes, in which the guardians of the peace are generally roasted.—*Punch.*

"BLIGHTED BLOSSOM."

Of flowers that deck the early green,
Or cling o'er spring-time's budding bower;
Hang out beside the wakening stream
Before their ripe and sunny hour;
Some chilling wind perhaps lays them low,
Maybe, some kindling warmth, too,
Has caused their early petals blow,

For colder days to come and pierce them through.
Just so with hearts, the fairest flowers
That earth has ever known to yield,
Pining when young within imprisoned bowers,
Blighted for'er in earth's productive field.

See the young maid, delicate and fair,
With bloom inlaid upon the winning cheek;
And eyes that light up everywhere,
With gladness where they chance to meet.
Tripping about in childhood's home,
Where darkness ne'er was wont to frown;
Too soon she leaves those scenes of joy,
To roam where glooms come sadly down.

See you gray top of ancient dome,
'Neath which the night-owls shriek.
A solemn sight this darksome home,
Where sisters mute their silent vigils keep.
'Tis there we see that young and lovely face,
Bereft of home and every kindred dear;
Her penances come flowing on apace,
While chastenings thicken, tho' she does not fear.

Devoted to her cause she labours through,
Bearing scoffs whence pity ought to flow,
And jeers from foes she e'er considered true,
Without a frown to soothe her woe.
There with afflictions heavy chide,
And sorrows freezing her around,
This pale-faced maiden sought to hide,
A blighted flower on tainted ground.

The world we ought not to exclude,
'Tis not our sacred rule. Let so?
'Tis not to mope in silence crude,
But 'mongst all nations widely sow.
But ne'er the tempters can us foil,
With lures deceptive that they wear,
For man must onward sue his toil,
And woman help-meet tend her share.

GEO. C. SWAIN.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

VIENNA WHITE BREAD.—Professor Horsford gives the following recipe for making the celebrated Vienna white bread: In the first place, great care is taken in the preparation of the flour. Scrupulous neatness and cleanliness are observed in all the processes of preparing the yeast and dough. The dough is placed in an oven somewhat of the type of the aerotherm, that is, surrounded by currents of heated air, maintaining a uniform temperature of about 380 deg. By an arrangement of steam pipes, jets of steam are introduced into the oven to maintain an atmosphere saturated with moisture, and so retard the evaporation of water from the loaf during all the early part of the baking. When the loaf has attained its fullest distension and is penetrated by myriads of minute pores, the steam is shut off, and a side door, communicating with a separate fire from that which heats the oven, is opened. From this the heat of an intense blaze is flashed into the oven, to be reflected from the low, glazed, tile roof, and give that requi-

site delicate red tint to the surface, which at the same time charges a thin crust with an aroma which is the product of roasting—an essential oil—most grateful to the palate. This part of the operation is brief, and is watched through a glass door. When complete the loaves are taken from the tins and immediately varnished with warm milk or water, with which a little good melted butter has been incorporated. The water of the milk quickly evaporates, and leaves a fine glazed surface. We can testify from considerable personal experience that the Vienna bread and beer are the best to be found anywhere.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Sultan of Zanzibar has imprisoned the man Moosa, who gave false intelligence regarding Dr. Livingstone.

BURNS' only surviving son is now living in Cheltenham, and has reached the advanced age of seventy-two.

A CIRCULAR has been issued announcing the determination of the council to hold the Workmen's International Exhibition in 1870 instead of 1869.

SOUTHERN RUSSIA, and its rich wheat lands, cry aloud for cheap labour, where the population, already sparse, is reduced in its effect by the demands of the Greek Church, which on an average admits not more than twenty working days per month.

A SPECIES of dwarf fossil elephant has been discovered in the island of Malta by Mr. Busk. According to a communication made by him to the Zoological Society its height is only from 2½ feet to 3 feet. Another species previously discovered by Dr. Falconer had a height of only 4½ feet.

PROFESSOR TARDIEN says articles dyed with coralline have lately gone over to France from England, and he warns the public to avoid purchasing them, since they are as dangerous as ladies' dresses dyed with Schweinfurth green, which a very few years ago caused the death of several persons.

SCHOOL FOR SHEPHERDS IN FRANCE.—The French Government is determined to establish a school for the instruction of youths for shepherds; the locality selected is the Imperial Sheep Farm of the Haut Tingry, in the department of the Pas de Calais, where there is a magnificent flock of merinos and half-breeds, from which a considerable number of rams are supplied to farmers and breeders all over the country. The farm comprises about 500 acres of land.

DISCOVERY OF OLD FRESCOS.—A local paper states that a short time since some curious mural paintings were discovered on the north wall of the parish church of Bradfield Combust, Suffolk, now being restored under the supervision of Mr. Penrose. They probably date from the fourteenth century. One represents St. George and the Dragon; another, St. Christopher fording the stream with the infant Saviour upon his shoulder; while a third is supposed to portray a scraph, but is not so distinct as the others. The many coats of whitewash by which they are hidden have been removed as carefully as possible, and it is to be hoped that it may not be found necessary to cover them again with plaster. They are well worthy of a visit, as is also the curious old church itself, which has long been in a dilapidated and, in some respects, dangerous condition. The central fresco may be intended to point to the water of baptism, the conflict with sin being figured on the one side, and the joy of heaven on the other.

SINGING FOR A FORTUNE.—The Vienna journals mention that a curious will has just been left by a rich and eccentric octogenarian named Stanislas Poltzmar, who lately died on his property near Pesth. After bequeathing pensions to all his old servants, and alms to the poor, he sets down an extraordinary clause instituting as his universal legatee M. François Lotz, Hungarian by origin, and a notary by occupation in a little town near Vienna. But the testator annexes one condition: "My property," he wrote, "will belong to M. Lotz when he shall have sung, either at La Scala in Milan or the San Carlo in Naples, the parts of Otello, in the opera of that name, and that of Elvino in the 'Sonnambula.' I do not dispose of my wealth in this manner for the sake of being thought an original, but having been present four years ago at an evening party in Vienna, I heard this gentleman sing a cavatina from each of those operas with a beautiful tenor voice. Therefore, I believe him likely to become an excellent artist. In any case, if the public hisses him, he can console himself easily with three millions of florins which I leave him." M. Lotz is at Naples for the last month, preparing to carry out the wishes of the deceased. The notary is not forty, has a well-tuned voice, and works night and day to learn as quickly as possible the two parts with their pronunciation and singing.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JOE.—Handwriting good.

ANNIE M.—Your handwriting is neat, but too small.

CONSERVATIVE.—Handwriting rather good, but too pointed.

J. W.—The landlord can undoubtedly distrain for arrears of rent.

PAUL CLIFFORD.—The *Shipping Gazette* is published every evening, price threepence.

B. C.—You can get cheap apartments at Shepherd's Bush, on the Metropolitan Railway.

A GIRL OF THE PERIOD.—Your friend was perfectly correct; thin cards are decidedly preferable to thick ones.

T. B.—Flogging is still practised in the Royal Navy, under certain regulations; but only for very serious offences.

MONA.—The author of the book is the French novelist, Dumas. You may purchase the book almost at any bookseller's, at 1s. or 1s. 6d. each volume.

ATALANTA.—If the autograph be rare you might find a purchaser in the principal librarian of the British Museum.

RICHARDUS.—Apply to a news agent, who will give you a list of the proper books to use for the purpose of acquiring the system of shorthand.

SWANSEA VALE.—A servant being seduced from the employment of a master, the latter has a right of action against the seducer for losses sustained.

TOM HAMMOND.—We think it must have been a carbuncle, and not a boil. The red scar will very likely disappear in time.

J. W. H.—The presence of water is detected by the thinness and blueness of the milk. It would require to be analysed to detect other matter.

ROBERT MUIR.—The free use of lime-water and milk has often proved efficacious, say one pint daily, and avoid unwholesome food.

F. G. BRADANT.—1. The colour of your hair is golden. 2. The meaning of the initials, J. H. E., is "Jesus, the Saviour of Men."

T. WILLIAMS.—Send your advertisement through an agent or newsagent in the nearest town to the Times, or write direct to the publisher.

NELLY BLY.—Frederick, from the German, implies rich peace; George, from the Greek, a husbandman; Edward, from the Saxon, happy keeper; William, from the German, defending many.

EMMIE C.—Wash your hands and arms frequently in soft, pure water, slightly tepid, with the best pale yellow soap, then dry them thoroughly with a rather rough towel.

THE WIFE.—If the woman cannot prove that your husband gave her the goods of his own free will, you can undoubtedly claim them; at the same time, we think you have but a poor chance of recovering them.

E. BURGESS.—The ceremony having taken place, the marriage would be legal; previously, however, the parent or parents could forbid the banns, the bride being under age.

W. A. C.—Apply to a dealer in oil paintings—the fraternity is very numerous—or send your picture to a sale room. We fear, however, that in either case you would not be remunerated for your trouble.

F.—You may obtain a copy of the play at any theatrical bookseller's, and frequently at a second-hand book-stall: the price would be about one shilling; if purchased at a stall perhaps only a few pence.

HELEN H.—The "Golden Hope" has not appeared in separate form; you can, however, by application to the editor of *THE LONDON READER*, obtain the numbers or monthly parts in which the story appeared.

S. T.—1. Your handwriting is far from good, it is too small, and the letters not well formed, but this you can remedy by practising carefully. 2. The colour of your hair is light brown.

POETRY.—"Never Despair," by Mark Johnson; "To Alice," by George Winfield, are too lengthy. "After Labour," by S. P. S.; and "My Gertrude's Portrait," by S. T. L., are not sufficiently up to our standard, therefore with thanks, are declined.

C. P.—The overland route to China costs about 190l., first class per Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamers. From Southampton you touch at Gibraltar and Malta, and pass through Egypt, afterwards touch at Aden, Point de Galle, Singapore, Hong-Kong, and Shanghai. The voyage takes about two months' steaming. If

you go through France you gain about a week's time, but see nothing of Egypt. The longer voyage takes about five months, and is out of the track of commerce bound ships, and it is seldom that ships call anywhere. The passage money in a first-class sailing vessel would be about 80l. including messing, wines, &c., but you must find your own bedding. Some shipmasters only charge 50l., but the mess is very inferior as a rule.

JOHN ROBERTS.—1. To take grease out of cloth, procure some turpentine and pour it over the part that is greasy, rub it till quite dry with a piece of clean flannel, brush the part well, and hang up the garment in the open air to take the smell away. 2. Ask a chemist.

G. GRAY.—You must obtain your landlord's permission to erect the building you name, and you would do well, for your own security, not to commence building without consulting a solicitor, or you may eventually lose your money.

A SUFFERER.—All depends upon the wording of your agreement. If therein it is stated that you are a monthly tenant, then the notice is legal; if not, you are a yearly tenant. Your safest course, however, would be to lay the agreement before a solicitor.

IRISH OLIVER.—1. The government stamp upon the bill is all-sufficient; when due and paid it is usual for the holder to write a receipt at the bank. 2. The agreement would not be legal without a stamp; or, to make it so, you would, after so many days, have to pay a fine of 10s.

J. M. S. NEWMAN.—For a decoction of sarsaparilla, take four ounces of the root, slice it down, put the slices into four pints of water, and simmer for four hours; take out the sarsaparilla and beat it into a mash, put it into the liquor again, and boil down to two pints, then strain and cool the liquor.

ROSA MAUDE.—1. To clean white ostrich feathers, cut 4 oz. of white soap very small, dissolve in 4 pints of warm water, make the solution into a lather by beating it with wires; then put the feathers in, and rub them well for five or six minutes, afterwards wash clean with warm water, and shake until dry. 2. Handwriting good.

A CONSTANT READER.—1. We should require to know something about your constitution, before harsening a conjuncture to the use of such a remedy. 2. Consult a doctor. 3. Soda, dissolved in cold water, is good for cleaning hair-brushes. You should take care that the back of the brush does not touch the water.

PICTURES.

Dressed for an evening party,
Light falling on your hair,
I saw you on the landing,
Just turning towards the stair.
You stood to draw your glove on,
And you looked down in the hall,
There many were arriving,
And I amidst them all.
'Tis a picture lasting always,
Engraved upon my brain,
Dressed for that evening party,
Oh! I see you oft again.
And your smile so true and honest,
As your glance upon me fell,
Ah! that look betrayed a secret,
I had long'd to hear you tell. M. A. D.

S.—To make the hair curl, take half-an-ounce of carbonate of ammonia, put it into a pint of boiling water, let it stand till cold, then put it into a bottle and cork well to keep it from evaporating. Occasionally rub a little into the roots of the hair with a piece of flannel; rub dry afterwards with a towel.

HARRY.—The sun passes through the equator twice in the year, about March 21st, which is called the vernal equinox, and September 22nd, the autumnal equinox. The equinoctial points move backwards about fifty seconds yearly, requiring 25,000 years to complete the revolution. This is called the procession of the equinoxes, which is said to have been observed by ancient astronomers.

DORA DALE.—Christmas Day falls on the 25th of December; the Epiphany on the 6th of January. In the Eastern church Christmas and the Epiphany are deemed but one and the same feast. The latter, vulgarly called Twelfth Day, celebrates the manifestation of the Saviour by the appearance of the star which conducted the Magi to the place where it was to be found.

EXCISEMAN.—1. We know of no work which contains a list of last year's examinations. 2. You may obtain for 2s. 6d. or 3s. 6d., of any bookseller, "A Guide to the Civil Service." Has your named the particular department in which you desire to enter, we would have given you information as to the subjects in which candidates are examined.

MARIA.—Apply to the secretary of the Protestant Blind Society, 12, Wellington-street, London Bridge. This society is to relieve the blind of every Protestant denomination, by granting pensions of five shillings per week. There is also a society for promoting the general welfare of the blind, by providing them with remunerative occupations, at 127, Euston-road.

X. Y. Z.—1. Chints should be cleaned according to the Oriental manner, that is washed in plain water, with very little soap; then boiled in orange or rice water; after which, instead of being submitted to the smoothing iron, it should be rubbed smooth with a polished stone. 2. To clean silk or ribbon, mix sifted stale bread crumbs with powder-blue, and rub it thoroughly all over the article; then shake well, and dust with clean soft cloths.

GRANDMA.—Our advice is, not to tamper with your hair. A dye, however, may be made by dissolving a quarter of an ounce of nitrate of silver in little less than a quarter of a pint of distilled rose or elder water, even common water will do, provided it has been boiled for a few minutes, and then allowed to cool; if the hair be quite clean, and freed from grease by first washing it with borax dissolved in warm water, then allowing it to get dry, the solution has only to be combed carefully through the hair to produce the effect desired.

CHARLES ROWE.—If your hiring were yearly, it cannot be put an end to by either party, until the end of the year. The act expressly states "that if there be anything in the

contract of hiring to show that it was intended to be for a year, the reversion of weekly or monthly wages will not alter it." From the general tone of your letter it appears to us, that in making the engagement, you considered it, at the time, to be a yearly hiring. If this be the case, you had better take no steps without consulting a solicitor.

AFFLICTED.—1. From your letter we believe that the nervousness out of which arises your stammering has been caused by bad habits—change them and you will cure the stammering. 2. By watching the advertising columns of the daily papers you will see that certain persons advertise to cure stammering. If you desire not permanently to injure your constitution, avoid galvanism as a remedy for your affliction, and take the advice of a respectable medical practitioner. If you do not do this, you will in all probability fall into a consumption. 3. Your writing, if you would use a finer pen with a lighter hand, might do for book-keeping.

ANNIE M., eighteen, tall, good looking, brown hair and eyes. Respondent must be tall, about twenty-four years of age, well educated, and in good circumstances.

CHERIE, twenty-six, good looking, inclined to embonpoint. Respondent must be from thirty to forty. A respectable tradesman preferred.

BLANCHE, a brunette, and thoroughly domesticated, wishes to correspond with a dark gentleman. He must be lively, affectionate, and good tempered.

JULIA (a Frenchman), thirty, very good looking, medium height, brown curly hair, blue eyes, and small feet. Respondent must be fair, and very pretty.

ANNIE F., seventeen, very pretty, blue eyes, Auburn hair, musical, fond of home, and domesticated. Respondent must be dark, handsome, and have 300l. a year.

MAGDALENE DUFFREATH (a tradesman's daughter), nineteen, medium height, light eyes, dark brown hair, and domesticated. Respondent must be respectable.

MARGARET, MARY, and ALICE.—"Margaret," twenty, "Mary," nineteen, "Alice," seventeen. Respondents must be well educated, with a taste for music.

SARAH ANN MUGGINS (a servant), twenty-three, medium height, dark, black hair, gray eyes, and of a cheerful disposition. Respondent must be a steady mechanic.

DOUBLE SHELL, twenty-one, 5 ft. 8 in., light hair, blue eyes, good tempered, and very steady. Respondent must be tall, fair, good looking, fond of home, and about nineteen.

M. M., twenty-two, tall, light brown hair, blue eyes, ladylike, affectionate, thoroughly domesticated, and well educated. Respondent must be about twenty-eight, tall, and good looking. A tradesman or clerk preferred.

FLORA and EVA.—"Flora," twenty, tall, dark hair and eyes. Respondent must be tall and good looking. "Eva," sixteen, medium height, light hair and eyes, and fair. Respondent must be tall, good looking, and have money.

LOTTIE and EMILY.—"Lottie," twenty, short, blue eyes, Auburn hair, good looking, and fond of home. Respondent must be tall, dark, and good looking. "Emily," twenty-one, short, brown hair and eyes, good looking, and fond of music. Respondent must be dark, and fond of home; money no object.

MECHANIC and MAIR BRACE.—"Mechanic," 5 ft. 10 in., dark, brown eyes and hair, good looking, fond of home and music. Respondent must be fair, good looking, and thoroughly domesticated. "Mair Brace," 5 ft. 8 in., dark hair, blue eyes, good looking, very fond of home and music. Respondent must be domesticated and pretty.

AMELIA H., FLORENCE S., and EDITH H.—"Amelia H.," seventeen, medium height, fair, gray eyes, dark brown hair, good figure, and good tempered. "Florence S.," twenty, rather tall, fair, blue eyes, light brown hair, and of a loving disposition. "Edith H.," seventeen, rather short, fair, blue eyes, and golden hair. Respondents must be dark, and good tempered; mechanics preferred.

SARAH, PATTIE, and LIZZIE.—"Sarah," good looking, twenty-nine, 5 ft. 11 in., and thoroughly domesticated; would like to correspond with a mechanic. "Pattie," twenty-nine, good looking, tall, and dark. Respondent must be a farmer. "Lizzie," 5 ft. 1 in., considered good looking, blue eyes, brown hair, affectionate, and fond of home; would like to correspond with a stone carver.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

WILLIE is responded to by—"Lizzie," twenty-five, tall, dark, fond of home, and thoroughly domesticated.

CURT by—"B. V. A. B.," twenty-two, medium height, considered good looking by his shipmates.

W. W. W. by—"Snowdrop," twenty-one, very pretty, golden hair, blue eyes, and a nice figure. Will be happy to exchange cartes de visite.

TRUE BLUE by—"Conservative," twenty-three, tall, genteel, brown hair, and good tempered.

CLARA by—"S. M. A. D.," twenty-three, good looking, and amiable.

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Testimonial from the Right Honourable **THE EARL OF CLARENDON, K.G.**

Grosvenor Crescent, June 16th, 1868.

SIR.—I have much pleasure in informing you that your Embrocation has been of great service to Lady Clarendon, who has used it about six weeks for Chronic Rheumatism of the knees and feet; no other application has given her similar relief.—Yours &c., CLARENDON.

Testimonial from the Right Honourable **FRANCES COUNTESS WALDEGRAVE.**

Strawberry Hill, July 16th, 1868.

FRANCES COUNTESS WALDEGRAVE is very glad to be able to bear testimony to the extraordinary efficacy of Mr. Powell's Embrocation for Rheumatism; it is a safe and very quick cure for all Rheumatic pains. Prepared by E. V. POWELL, Twickenham, and sold by most Chemists, at 1s. 1d. and 2s. 9d. per Bottle.

NATURE'S PURIFIER.

FINELY PREPARED VEGETABLE CHARCOAL, by its action in absorbing impure gases in the stomach and bowels, is found to afford speedy relief in cases of impure breath, acidity, gout, indigestion, dyspepsia, heartburn, worms, &c.

BRAGG'S CELEBRATED CHARCOAL SOLD IN BOTTLES, 2s., 4s., and 6s. EACH, THROUGH ALL CHEMISTS, AND BY THE MAKER,

J. L. BRAGG,

No. 2, Wigmore Street, Cavendish Square, London.

SAINT PHILIP AND JACOB PAROCHIAL IMPROVEMENT FUND, BRISTOL.

Contributions are earnestly solicited for this Fund, which has been Established to raise £3,500, for

1. The repairs, &c., of the Parish Church.
2. The repairs of the Boundaries of Churchyard.
3. A New Organ.
4. Infant School-room.
5. Ragged School and Mission Church.

By means of this Fund, works are continuously being carried on. The greater portion can be completed this year if the money is forthcoming. ONE THOUSAND POUNDS, in addition to all in hand or promised, required this year to meet demands of contractors.

Donations and Subscriptions are earnestly solicited by the Vicar and Churchwardens of St. Philip and Jacob.

THE 'CHEF' SAUCE

CREAMY NO SEDIMENT

Everywhere at 1s. A. DESPLAUX, 28, Great Winchester Street, E.C., Sole Proprietor.

BELGRAVE FURNISHING COMPANY, 12, Sloane Street, Belgrave Square.—Before deciding elsewhere, inspect the magnificent STOCK on view in these extensive and well-arranged show rooms, where may be seen pollard oak dining-room suites and gilt drawing room ditto, of the most costly description, suitable for the finest mansions, and every necessary in furnishing, adapted for first-class residences, at comparatively low prices.

ATKINSON AND CO.—Household Linen, Blankets, Sheet, Damask Table Linen, in all qualities. Directors and proprietors of hotels, public institutions, schools, &c., supplied on manufacturers' prices. Illustrated Catalogues, containing drawings of the furniture exhibited in the show rooms, forwarded free, or can be had on application. All goods marked in plain figures. Atkinson and Co., 198 to 212, Westminster Bridge Road, London.

CLERICAL, MEDICAL, and GENERAL LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY, 13, St. James's Square, London, S.W.—Established 1824.

FINANCIAL RESULTS OF THE SOCIETY'S OPERATIONS.

The annual income exceeds £201,000

The Assurance Fund safely invested is over 1,448,000

The New Policies in the last year were 466, assuring 271,440

The Bonus added to Policies at the last division was 275,077

The total claims by death paid amount to 1,962,629

The following are among the distinctive features of the society:

Credit System.—On any policy for the whole of life, where the age does not exceed 60, one-half of the annual premiums during the first five years may remain on credit, and may either continue as a debt on the policy, or be paid off at any time.

Endowment Assurances may be effected, without profits, by which the sum assured becomes payable on the attainment of a specified age, or at death, whichever event shall first happen.

Invalid Lives may be assured at rates proportioned to the increased risk.

Prompt Settlement of Claims.—Claims paid thirty days after proof of death.

The Reversionary Bonus at the Quinquennial Division in 1862 averaged 48 per cent., and the Cash Bonus 28 per cent. on the premiums paid in the five years.

The next Division of Profits will take place in January, 1867, and persons who effect new policies before the end of June next will be entitled at that division to one year's additional share of profits over later entrants.

Tables of rates and forms of proposal can be obtained of any of the Society's agents, or of **GEORGE CUTCLIFFE, Actuary and Secretary, 13, St. James's Square, London, S.W.**